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THE FIRE AND THE WOOD

A Love Story

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BY

R. C. HUTCHINSON

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To M. H. CHURCHILL

MY DEAR JEREMY,

You will remember that I told you Josef's story one evening, the summer before last, in the Half Moon at Clare. You thought then that it was worth putting on paper, and I still think it was. But the time, between now and then, has not been a good one for the job: the means by which we know what is happening round the world have become so efficient that it's increasingly hard to concentrate, for several hours a day, on the fortunes of one or two people. The excuse, of course, is not valid: no excuse is valid. The masters of the trade have done it as well, and sometimes better, when the hubbub is loudest. But I myself find difficulty, with these cold winds blowing incessantly against the mind, in raising it to that temperature which seems to me necessary for work which has the smallest pretension to seriousness; and I fancy that some others among the feebler-hearted brethren may be in the same case.

I mention the handicap as an apology for dedicating such a book as this to you, an amateur suckled by Turgenev and weaned on Henry James. Will you take the gesture as one of gratitude for many kindnesses, and for twenty years of friendship?

Yours ever,

R. C. H.

Infantry Train Centre

R—

March, 1940

THE FIRE AND THE WOOD

IN THE Moltke Hospital at Hartzinnfeld the Director's office is now on the ground floor; directly to your right as you go in by the main entrance. This is obviously the sensible arrangement. It is one of the innumerable minor achievements of the present régime.

Before 1933 the Director had his quarters on the second floor of the west building. There was no lift. You had to go up about fifty steps, then the whole length of the northward corridor; or rather, you were taken first along the southward corridor and round the corner to the waiting-room. This was a long, very narrow room which looked like a piece of the passage chopped-off: it had, in fact, been constructed in that fashion. It was equipped with a little table and two shiny chairs, a portrait of the Reichspräsident, half a dozen recent issues of *Neue Medizinische Monatsschrift*.

This was where Josef Zeppichmann waited for his first interview.

"The Director will be ready for you in a few minutes, Herr Doktor," the porter said.

A little too casual, the man's voice: he would have used the same tone for the patients' visitors. But the 'Herr Doktor' gave Josef Zeppichman a prick of pleasure. Of course, they had called him that all up and down the wards at Zornenwalde, but it made a difference, now, to feel that the title really belonged to him. 'Doctor Zeppichmann.' It was like wearing his first long trousers: knees patched—Max had already worn them two years—but long trousers all the same. Leaning against the table, he took out his father's letter, received that morning, and read a part of it again.

'Franz and Moses and old Frau Wagner were in last night just after I had closed the shop. I told them that my son Dr. Zeppichmann had been given a post. My son Dr. Zeppichmann, I said, Doctor of Medicine with full diploma, my son the Doctor has an important post in the Moltke Hospital at Hartzinnfeld. Many candidates, I said, dozens of candidates, but Josef of course beats the lot of them. Ahi, Josef, my lad, that was a fine thing to say. Franz—you should have seen Franz's face! He put his arm round my neck. Ah, Jakob, he said, think of all you have done! In the war you give your right leg for your country. Now you give your son to the glory of science and healing! And Frau Wagner says to send you a kiss on both cheeks, like she gave you when you were a tiny boy.'

Ugh, those fat, moist kisses of Frau Wagner's! But it was nice to think of them gathered in the room behind the shop, Papa garrulous and beaming, Frau Wagner's damply shining eyes, the small, appreciative grunts of Moses Echlinger: all of them talking about him, Josef, the little boy who'd got to be Dr. Zeppichmann: him, about him.

'But you haven't told us yet how long this career is to be. You know, Josef, my darling, how Mamma and I hope that very soon you will come back to work among your own people, here at Richterhausen. Ahi, what a proud day that will be! You won't forget, laddie, that so many of our own people here, in the factory quarter and round about the old market, are always wanting a good doctor. Typhoid there was, last summer. And bad limbs they get at the factory and often there are sore places and much jaundice now that food is so bad. Poor people, yes, but so many between them can give a doctor what is right for a man of such good education who gives up his life to them. Dr. Sponholz has a little motor-car, 10 horsepower, not so bad! But he is getting old, I have heard people say that he would like a young assistant . . .'

Back to Richterhausen! Staring at the bare wall of the waiting-room, Josef saw the street where the shop was, the pump at the corner. You turned left there—to the right the road only led into Bieber's yards—and for three or four straight kilometres you were held between the railway siding and a drawn monotony of workers' houses. You crossed the tramlines and the road gradually shed its workshops, its little garden plots; then the telephone poles ran on dead straight, aimed at the slag hills of Auermund. Richterhausen: old Maria Kuschnitzki, bulbous and dishevelled, sprawling over her barrow; a switch of tabid children playing in the sand by the railway track; torn posters flapping in the damp wind. Everything infected by the stench of the tanneries, which flavoured even your food. Some time he would go there for a few days; later on, when he had saved for a good overcoat and smart shoes, when the last skin of Richterhausen accent had been stripped from his speech. But stay there? devote the rest of life to that copse of crouching houses?

He would have to write very carefully to Papa, very affectionately. Papa, after all, had set him going—done without tobacco for fourteen years. The letter must carry a hint, so gently phrased, that a doctor's career should not be too much fenced, that the people it was useful to know lived in the larger places. Before long he would send a present for Mamma; Mamma liked a dash of colour, and there were fine shawls in a shop he had noticed near the station.

"The Director is ready to see you now."

Along the corridors again, with the old porter puffing officiously ahead. Across the landing, blinking under the candid curiosity of a girl who stood at an open door. Another corridor, where the smell of lysol was intensified. A door covered in scarlet baize, and a sudden guilty feeling, as when he had stood outside the anatomy school waiting for the *viva voce*.

"Doctor Zeppichmann, Herr Direktor!"

"Just sit down a minute, Doctor. I want to get this letter off . . . All right, Gustav!"

Dr. Wildelau shifted his pince-nez, moved a paper-weight to uncover a letter from the dean of the Zornenwalde medical school. *'I have found Zeppichmann a most industrious student, of high intelligence, thoroughly conscientious in all his duties. I have no hesitation in recommending him . . .'* Just so, just so! Old Plünnecke fastened the same encomium to every graduate he despatched. Character, that was one of the things Plünnecke did not fully understand; the others were biology, anatomy, diagnosis . . . And yet, oddly, one of the finest teachers in Hanover. This time he had sent a raw one, by the look of it. A lad from the coal-pits, you'd have said, done up to imitate a suburban gentleman: his square, corneous face pumiced to a horrid brightness; the big loose jacket fitting only on the shoulders, far too broad for the fellow's skimpy height; long, red wrists leading down from the frayed cuffs into hugely awkward paws.

"Well, Doctor Zeppichmann, I've had a most glowing account of you from Doctor Plünnecke."

"Yes, Herr Direktor."

Certainly the eyes were alive. Not intellectual, no, nothing of subtlety; but intense, devoted, like a setter's eyes. Yes, there was something altogether canine about this youth, the air of an ugly watch-dog—a puppy rather, a puppy with its first good beating just behind, desperately keen to show its usefulness, desperately gauche.

"You left Doctor Plünnecke in good health?"

"In fairly good health. He feels his age a good deal, I think."

"Indeed? Doctor Plünnecke is eight years my junior."

"Oh . . ."

Wildelau pulled another letter from the typewritten

pile, altered a word and signed it. If this man had to be invited to dinner, who would Hildegarde get to meet him? He said slowly:

"You are very fortunate to have studied under Plünnecke. A splendid teacher. If I had a son of my own, that is where I should send him. Without a doubt. Without any hesitation at all. But perhaps I ought just to say this. A man who gives up so much of his time to tutorial work cannot—in the nature of things he cannot—keep so well abreast with current medical practice as we are obliged to in our work here, for instance. You will realise that you are now passing on to another stage in your education. You will learn here many new things, you may find that our practice—indeed, our theory—differs in many particulars from what Doctor Plünnecke has taught you. That is inevitable—just as life is inevitably different from the picture of it drawn by a school-teacher. What I mean is—I don't want your sense of loyalty to Doctor Plünnecke to make you unduly critical of methods you find in use at this hospital. I would say, Observe, Compare, Appreciate—Criticise, if you like, mentally. But to begin with, reserve your judgements."

"Indeed, yes, Herr Direktor, I understand that."

Wildelau re-crossed his legs. There was a faint-hued satisfaction in this familiar duty, like the quiet enjoyment of his own perfected routine: shaving in the morning, opening his private letters with the paper knife which was always laid beside his plate. Pleasure, too, in the sense of his own spirit flowing down into this empty vessel; his own honesty, homeliness, his certainty of purpose.

"Are you interested in politics at all?"

"No, Herr Direktor, I have never concerned myself with politics."

"Ah, so! That is very wise, I think. Of course, we must always remember first of all that we are citizens of a great nation. We must be ready at any moment to devote our-

selves, everything we have, to our national duty. But men who want to get on in their profession have no time for political ebullience. There is too much of that among our young men nowadays. Too much speech-making and scrapping, even in a quiet place like this Hartzinnfeld . . . I want you to feel that you are not merely working in this hospital, but that you are a part of it. We are all bound together in one common purpose, we are, as it were, a single weapon forged against the great enemy, disease . . .”

He glanced at the clock. Twenty past four already, and he had to see a visiting surgeon at half-past. A pity. He must have another talk with this boy later on. Something might be made of a creature with such earnest, hungry eyes; if not a doctor, at any rate a wholly reliable ward-man.

“. . . To begin with you will be working under Doctor Röstel. His surgery is over there in the north building—the porter will show you. Eight o'clock, will you be there please. And if any questions arise about your work they should go to Doctor Röstel in the first place; he will consult me if there's anything he can't settle himself. Well, Zeppichmann, I hope you'll be happy here. I'll give you just one hint. I have found that one's happiness in life depends on a single condition: on knowing that one has done one's duty.”

He held out his hand. Josef rose as if to take it. Stopped short. Fumbled.

“May I just ask something?”

“Certainly, certainly.”

“It's just—it's this way. Doctor Plünnecke was kind enough to give me facilities for some private research. I—he encouraged that. I—I was wondering if perhaps you would have no objection to my continuing that research—in my own time, of course. I thought that possibly you might grant me the use of a small laboratory—I mean, a bench, just a bench in the bacteriological laboratory.”

Wildelau stretched his lower lip.

"As to your carrying on private research—well, I suppose there's no harm in that, so long as it doesn't interfere with your work. And possibly Doctor Dittmer will not object to your being in his laboratory sometimes, if he knows exactly what you're doing. In what branch are these—researches of yours?"

For a moment Josef's mouth wouldn't open. This was one of the cues for which he had rehearsed, but the sentences which came so fluently in a hotel bedroom would not take shape before Wildelau's fixed, inquiring eyes.

"I am on the track of something important," he said abruptly.

"Yes?"

"A new polyvalent tuberculin."

Wildelau turned his eyes away.

"Doctor Zeppichmann," he said, staring at his blotting-paper, "I don't want to be in any way unsympathetic, but I think—I think you ought to know this: of some twenty thousand revolutionary discoveries in medicine which young men announce every year, something like thirty-five per cent are new and perfect antitoxins for tuberculosis. I suppose that at this very moment hundreds, literally hundreds of scientists who have spent their whole lives in research are at work on just that problem. In America there are huge laboratories with fully-trained staffs engaged on nothing else. Do you—do you really think that your chances of success are very rosy?"

This time there was no hesitation.

"I think I am on the way to success, Herr Direktor."

From the loose jacket came a long, dirty envelope crammed with manuscript.

"I have a record of all my workings up to date. I have used Schulze-Manz's formula as my basis, but I've introduced two new elements which I call Psi Plus and Psi

Minus. I've been experimenting to determine the exact coefficients, and I think now—"

Wildelau cleared his throat. "Yes yes—"

"—I thought perhaps you might care to glance through my tabulations. It wouldn't take you more than an hour—some time when you're not particularly busy. This top sheet gives a brief explanation of my system—I've divided the data into five groups corresponding with the five hypotheses which I've detailed—"

"—Yes yes, some time, some time I should be very much interested." Wildelau folded the sheets and slid them back into the envelope. He said, "Yes, Zeppichmann, I'm very glad you've occupied your spare time in this way. It is—it is good practice, it develops orderly habits in thinking. Yes, some time I should like to look through your essay. At present I am particularly busy, I'm finding it very hard to get through all my work." He rose. "I'm sure Doctor Röstel will be most interested to see these—these papers. Well now, I have an appointment at half-past four—it's past that already."

But the youth did not move. Grave, awkward, determined: like a dog asking to be taken for a walk, Wildelau thought.

"There is just one more thing I wanted to ask you, Herr Direktor. I thought that you might have some cases here, some cases in the Tuberculosis Department, which are not responding to any standard treatment. I thought—it seems possible that one of those cases would prove to be exactly what I'm looking for. I thought—I mean, when you've had time to go through my analysis of results—I thought you might be willing to hand such a case over to me—for a limited period, of course—"

"Do I understand you to mean," Wildelau asked slowly, "that you want to try out your theories on one of my patients?"

"Well, yes. I don't mean, of course, one of the paying patients—"

"Doctor Zeppichmann:" Wildelau said, "when you have worked under me for twelve months or so you will probably have learnt something about my ethical position, about the creed on which all our work here is based. You will learn that we here regard each single life for which we are responsible as something of inestimable value . . . When that is learnt, we may perhaps discuss your proposals again. In the meantime, Doctor Dittmer may be willing for you to make some experiments on his animals. I can't promise that, of course . . ."

Josef said, politely: "I have already made experiments with two hundred groups of tubercle-infected rats—"

"—And how many of those are still extant?"

"In my last, what I call the M.44 group, the negative results only came to 17.6%."

"Which means, on a broad hypothesis, that you want me to give you a 17% chance of killing one of my patients?"

"I think I could put it at only 15%, given a suitable subject. And of course I'm not asking for a good case—not to begin with—only a case which has passed the line already."

Wildelau went to the door and opened it.

"In a year's time," he said, "I hope you will have shown me that you are not only a conscientious, reliable house-surgeon, but also that you have grown a little more mature, that your sense of proportion has developed. It can, I think—develop a good deal."

FROM the station, where he had left his bag, a narrow road curved up to the Bülow fountain. Standing there he had half the town in the sweep of his eyes, right over to where the new summer villas crept up into the pine woods, points of cream and scarlet in a crumpled curtain. One day he would live in a villa like that. The late sun, still strong enough to warm his face, flattered that notion. The street was quiet, the tramway didn't come up here. An old woman in grey clothes, twelve years behind the fashion, moved slowly along the footpath, stopping at all the windows of the smart, bijou shops, appraising, passing on, drinking the sunlight. That was the way to use a quiet town like this, a town of leaning sixteenth-century houses: to share its calmness, sip the small beauties which it held out as you passed, sunlight on an old wall, the smell of coffee; to live as probably she did in one of those sun-drowned villas, or in a little house down the Kirchenstrasse there with dormer windows; with one old servant, and a military pension. But that was a far country.

The working quarter was on the other side of the river. He went down that way, shifting his heavy bag from hand to hand: the same canvas bag that Jakob Zeppichmann had brought to Richterhausen from Lublin. And here the evening wind, coming freshly from the water, chilled his thoughts a little. The sun was in his eyes now, making the roofs black and forlorn. He had an address to go to, he had seen it in an advertisement panel at the station: *Handelstrasse 149. Accommodation for Professional Men and Families. Close to Rumprecht's Works.* It sounded the sort of place. To start with.

It was a Number 4 tram that Josef wanted, the policeman said.

A Number 4 came along the old quay and lurched across the bridge; changed its conductor pole in the square on the other side and barged round into Siemenstrasse. There Josef caught it; gratefully planted his bag on the platform and went inside. How much to Handelstrasse? Five pfennigs and two for the suitcase. Yes, luggage left on the platform was charged extra. Wearily he went to fetch it, and returned to his place heaving it above the passengers' knees. The crowded tram lurched to the right again and began to climb laboriously between the factory walls.

This Dr. Dittmer, Josef thought, he was evidently the man to be cajoled first of all. Dittmer, presumably, was head of the Research Department, and would have to be placated before one could use his tools. To begin with, Josef might pretend to be much interested in whatever Dittmer himself was doing; he might make himself useful, preparing compounds, taking readings. That would be the first stage . . . Dr. Wildelau? Pfui! A garrulous old woman, a little Caesar from the market stalls!

The street narrowed. Here, standing between two houses in the row, you could place your hands on both front-doors. The tram slowed to a walking pace, squeezing through a crowd which spread across the roadway: a crowd staring at the wreckage of a little shop, chairs with the legs torn off, broken china all over the footpath. With furious clanging the tram ground on, a message chalked on a wall slipped past the window and was lost. 'This happens to traitors.' An elderly man, a clerk from one of the factories, followed Josef's gaze and smiled.

"Communists, you see! The young men hereabouts are mostly that way. Sunday nights, they have to smash something to keep themselves amused." Looking hard at Josef's face he leant a little closer. "Let me just tell you. You're a

stranger to Hartzinnfeld? Well, people of your—people of your kind, they want to keep quiet as much as possible. I'm only being friendly, you understand?"

Josef smiled.

"Yes yes, I thank you. But I never meddle with politics. I've too much else to think about."

Handelstrasse was built in the eighties, but it incorporates, at the end farthest from where the tram stops, a lane that once ran between two farms. One of the farms still stands, much chopped about; a Department Manager belonging to Rumprecht's bullied it into a house of 1910 respectability; and Number 149 was once Ruckschade's Inn. It has been, from time to time, a storehouse and a box factory. Windows have been altered, and on the street side there is an ugly wing, built with bricks left over from one of the factories. But at the back its charm remains: the tiny dormer windows, the little gallery on two sides of the courtyard. The Spühlers, when they occupied the place a few years after the war, restored so much of its homeliness as their means and taste allowed. That courtyard holds you very pleasantly, when you have walked all the way along the dingy street. And though the rooms have got depressingly shabby, the upper windows give you a sight of the Graftel woods.

A student's cap was hanging just inside one of the front windows. The door-bell was out of action. Both these details were satisfactory to Josef as he stood by the door, sweating, sizing up the place: it had the air of genteel patronage, and a smack of comfortable inefficiency. One got on best by employing slightly inefficient people. Then the window above his head was jerked open, and Frau Spühler's round face, porched with a crimson dustcap, was staring down at him.

"If you please?"

Josef took off his hat.

"I understand, madam, that you have a room to let? I mean, for pension-accommodation."

Frau Spühler screwed her eyes, thinking hard.

"I'll come down," she said at last.

That gave her a little time, time to grasp the situation. Life always moved too fast for her, tradesmen were always arriving, lodgers asking for something; they popped things at you, they never gave you time to think. Mainly, she thought now about bolsters: one of the bolsters from the vacant room had gone to Herr Barthol; there was another in the attic, but it scattered feathers all over the place, whatever you did. Josef listened to the creak of the stair-boards as she came slowly down.

When she opened the door she stared at him as if his appearance there were a fresh phenomenon. Stared in silence, until her voice, in its irresponsible way, said suddenly: "Twenty-four Marks a week. That doesn't include a midday meal."

Josef regarded her earnestly.

"I didn't mean to pay more than twenty," he said.

Not more than twenty! And he looked like a vigorous feeder. Why did he stare at her so reproachfully, as if she were trying to cheat him? She said:

"I can show you the room."

Following her along the cracked linoleum, smelling faintly the afterglow of the last meal, his eyes went up and down from the fine grey hair leaking out of her cap to the awkward movement of her huge hips. Something reminded him faintly of his mother, though she was small. But this was a gentlewoman, comparatively; one who had fallen a step or two. Incipient rheumatoid arthritis, possibly. Twenty-four Marks! And he had hardly hoped to pay less than twenty-five at a place of this kind.

"There," she said, "this one."

But he had stopped a few paces back, where an open

door showed him an L-shaped room, half as big again as the one to which Frau Spühler was inviting him.

"May I look in here?"

It was empty, and he went across to the window. This was the sort of room a student of the better class had, a smart pair of shoes stood by the bed, there were pictures which he vaguely recognised as being in respectable taste. Like Herr Niewind's room at Zornenwalde. But what really mattered was that here one had room to work: a bench over there by the long window, with shelves—he could put them up himself—against the adjacent wall. Bring the light over to this corner with a two-way connection and a long flex, and the room would be a laboratory in embryo. The picture that his mind suddenly made went on through time: long evenings at his bench there, hundreds of hours of contented patience. To work as Koch did, alone and utterly confident: that was happiness.

"This is not a bad room," he said. "Of course, it's in rather bad repair . . ."

"But this is Herr Meisel's room."

"He is here for long?"

"Oh yes, there's no talk of his leaving us."

Josef went to the window again. Here, to the left, he could fix up a level table that would take his balance. He said:

"But perhaps Herr Meisel would be willing to change his room?"

Frau Spühler stared at his face, puzzled. You didn't ask lodgers to change their rooms.

"No," she said at last, "no, I don't think he would."

"How much does he pay for it?"

"Herr Meisel? For this room? How much does he pay?"

"Yes yes, what does he pay?"

"Well, I don't know. Let me see. Herr Meisel came

to us in 1929. Yes, we were charging twenty-two Marks then. Meat was a bit cheaper then, you see. The price of meat in Hartzinnfeld, it's become something terrible. We just had to put up our charges."

"But Herr Meisel still pays twenty-two Marks?"

"Well, you see, we couldn't put up the charge to the lodgers we had already, could we?"

She smiled, asking doubtfully for his understanding. Ah God, he thought, was it wise, was it fair to put such people in the world? These women, you could steal the rings off their fingers and they would think you were only doing it to save them from phalangeal cramp.

He said seriously: "Yes, I quite see that, I quite understand. But if I were to offer you twenty-five—no, twenty-four Marks, it would only be fair for me to have the best room. Herr Meisel would surely understand that."

"I don't think he'd like to change," she repeated. "You see, all his things are here."

"But they could be moved. It wouldn't take five minutes." He was calculating swiftly. One could get a good laboratory balance for a deposit of about seventy Marks. Instalments, say eight Marks a week. He ought to send home nine Marks a week—that was more or less agreed. It would be cutting things close, but . . .

"Twenty-five Marks," he said. "For this room. That's a definite offer."

Frau Spühler turned her head away. She was very unhappy. Twenty-five Marks, it wasn't to be sniffed at. The room at the end of the passage had been empty for three months. It was now six weeks since Herr Meisel had last paid his bill. Oh really she did not like this young man, she couldn't like him at all, coming here and wanting Herr Meisel's room and popping figures at her, not giving her time to think.

"I must ask my husband," she said, and went vaguely

away, leaving him in the passage. She knew that August would be no help at all, but it gave her a little more time.

Josef stood still, calculating. The house was very quiet, he heard only the crackle of a board recovering from Frau Spühler's steps, very faintly the murmur of her voice somewhere downstairs. Suddenly a new sound came from below, the sound of some one coughing. A harsh, uncontrolled cough. That was interesting.

He went down and got his bag.

When Frau Spühler returned, Josef's bag was in the middle of Herr Meisel's room, his coat and hat on one of the chairs.

"Well?" he asked.

He was like a hungry man with bread just out of reach.

"I was thinking," she said slowly, "—I mean, my husband says you ought to ask Herr Meisel yourself. You could explain to him."

"Just so. I can quite easily explain to Herr Meisel. Perhaps if we put one or two of Herr Meisel's things into the other room he would see how comfortable he'll be in there. These pictures, they'd show better in the smaller room."

"But not before Herr Meisel comes in," Frau Spühler said anxiously. "He'll be in any moment now. You can wait just a few minutes, surely you can wait! . . ."

"These cushions," Josef asked, "are they Herr Meisel's, or do they belong to the house?"

IT TOOK less than fifteen minutes to get most of Herr Meisel's belongings shifted. Josef did the greater part of the work himself. Frau Spühler, faintly hoping that Herr Meisel would hardly notice the change, was trying to put everything in the same order: the two small pictures where you could see them on entering the room, the large ones opposite the window. When it came to moving the wardrobe, that mahogany wardrobe which Herr Meisel had had sent from Berlin, Herr Spühler had to be called up to help.

Shorter than his wife, massive in neck and shoulders, Herr Spühler looked a very bullock for strength. Yes, like one of the young prize bullocks Josef had often seen in the Richterhausen market. "Ah yes," Herr Spühler said, rolling up his sleeves, "when I was in the Navy—a Warrant Officer, you understand—I could carry three men on my back. Three stokers, do you see, a hundred kilograms apiece, three hundred kilograms altogether. Carry them all along the fighting deck."

He walked all round the wardrobe, as if it were a city to conquer.

"Now this," he said, "I shall take upon my back. With my arms going round behind, like this." He took up his stance, back to back with the wardrobe, leaning forward, his big behind pressed against it. Large he might be, Josef thought, but standing like that he looked as flabby as a tortoise. "Now I just want you, Hilde, to tilt it forward till it rests on my back. And you, Doctor, would perhaps support the bottom a little."

"It is quite impossible," Frau Spühler said. "You can't

do that kind of thing, you know perfectly well you can't."

"We could carry it together," Josef suggested.

"Nonsense, little plum. It's quite all right, Doctor."

"But your heart, August! You know what the doctor said about your heart. You, Doctor, I ask you to forbid him. His heart, you can see what it's like."

Josef could only see Herr Spühler's behind. But he thought endocarditis was not unlikely.

"Perhaps if I took out some of the things . . ." he began.

But Herr Spühler, getting impatient, had succeeded in pulling it on to his back. And now, entirely in the semblance of a tortoise, he was moving towards the door, his short legs jerking along an inch at a time, his stomach issuing alarming little grunts. "August, you will kill yourself!" Frau Spühler repeated, hovering miserably on his flank. "Your heart will never get over it, to-morrow you'll be a dead man."

"I doubt if it'll go through the door that way," Josef said gloomily.

"Go through?" Herr Spühler panted. "Of course it—damn and blast it! Hilde, for God's sake! Doctor, get hold of it, can't you! Hold on to her stern!"

"That is the end!" Frau Spühler said.

Yes, it was going, it was through! The moulded top came hard against the passage wall, but somehow Herr Spühler had got it clear, the stern only scraping the lintel. On again, straight on along the passage, Herr Spühler creaking and grunting, his wife damp-eyed, while Josef in sullen exasperation fidgeted uselessly behind. Up the two steps Herr Spühler climbed, a pygmy Atlas in gigantic motion. But the next doorway beat him. Josef cried a warning but it was long too late, the wardrobe came against the lintel mouldings with such a crash that Herr Spühler himself was almost taken off his feet.

"Now he is destroying the house," Frau Spühler said.

Herr Spühler stood shaking like a snapped spring, the wardrobe still aloft.

"Sideways," he jerked out, "just go—sideways. Have goodness—fetch Professor Rupf!"

The trouble, as Professor Rupf and his wife saw it when they arrived, was to turn the wardrobe sideways from its present position. The top of it was jammed now between the ceiling and the architrave, the bottom wedged into the skirting where the passage narrowed. Tall and kindly, Professor Rupf surveyed the situation, measured the distances with his grave eyes.

"If you were to come out, Herr Spühler, then we could make a plan of campaign."

But Herr Spühler, still crouching underneath, could not see it like that.

"If I move it will crash to the ground," he answered.

"He should never have attempted such a thing," Frau Rupf said robustly. "At his age it's fatal to the heart."

"That is what I said," Frau Spühler agreed. "It was the Doctor here who wanted it moved."

"I am only fifty-nine!" Herr Spühler retorted.

The Professor turned to Josef, who stood with his hand in his pocket staring glumly at the wardrobe.

"If you would help me to pull it a little this way, Herr Doktor. The ceiling, you see, it's a bit higher on this side. That will give us a little turning space, then we can swing the bottom round and that will enable us to get it on its side. You, my dear, will you just hold on to the bottom—see that it doesn't scrape the wainscoting. Perhaps you could stoop down, Frau Spühler, just enough to get under and help your husband. Herr Spühler, could you ease yourself back a little?"

"No," said Herr Spühler definitely. "I can't move half an inch. I've got cramp."

"What did I tell you!" Frau Rupf said.

The Professor clicked his tongue. "Never mind, never mind, we shall lift it clear of him!"

"And is my husband to stay there for the rest of his life?" Frau Spühler asked.

Frau Rupf shrugged her shoulders.

"At this rate his life will not be long!"

From downstairs came the sound of glass jangling in a loose frame. That was the front door.

It was characteristic of this house, Erich Meisel thought as he stood gloomily in the entrance hall, that the front door should rattle like that. Characteristic, perhaps, of the whole of Hartzinnfeld: a ramshackle outpost of the provinces, where nothing ever happened quite to time, nothing ever fitted. He called, "Minna! My house-shoes!" but there was no answer. The silly girl in the kitchen was alternately coughing and singing at the top of her voice. He opened the door of the Spühlers' sitting-room, hoping for a morsel of Frau Spühler's constant, unreasoning sympathy. But no one was there.

He sat down, suddenly feeling his tiredness. The whole day, from breakfast, on one plate of soup. And he must have walked twenty kilometres. That did not seem so much; for on his holidays, three years ago, he had done as much as forty kilometres in the day, with nothing but bread and cheese for lunch. He was an athlete, Erich Meisel, trained to endurance. But the hard pavements, the eternal stairs to top-floor offices, worked more severely on that spare, narrow-chested body. It was unlucky to have been born in 1912, to have lost one's father three years later. The thin tightness of his face showed that. They were marks of aristocracy, Erich himself thought, emblems of Junker blood: the high cheek-bones he saw in a mirror, the deeply recessed eyes. But his forbears had mostly been stout-faced.

He would not have said that he was lonely. But there is a congenital disposition to loneliness, and spirits suffer

from that affection as constantly as certain bodies from asthma. The attacks come less from solitude than from the sense of being a stranger. And in Hartzinnfeld Erich was a stranger still. Oh yes, he had his friends, he would meet them in the Club this evening: lads of decent intention, honourable, if not of his own rank. But his thoughts were going back over the day's wanderings, and he realised that since leaving the house this morning he had spoken to no one as to a fellow man. "Goodmorning! I understand that you have a vacancy here for an assistant in the advertising department." "Goodmorning! You promised to tell me if you had notice of any openings for a shorthand writer . . . Oh. Oh, I see! Then you will let me know through the post?" That is not conversation.

For more than a month, now, this had been the daily routine. Life sloped downwards from the Tuesday, three years ago, when an army medical board had refused its certificate. That was the day when his spirit's growth had stopped. But the time in which hope and dignity had flickered out together was the moment when he last stood in Birnegarten's office: the fat Birnegarten leaning back in his chair, heavily suave, a little nervous. ". . . This new combination involves the fusion of the two publicity departments. I'm sure, Herr Meisel, you will appreciate the fact that the more experienced men have first claim. I needn't tell you how much I regret that the increasing severity of competition makes these measures necessary . . ." Dust swimming in a column of sunlight, the smell of new distemper, and a door swinging. Then a stocky youth with a big nose and a Hamburg accent asking if Herr Meisel would be so very kind as to show him his record books.

He had told no one, written to none of his friends. In a letter to his mother he had said that the quiet provincial life suited him, that he was too busy to spend a weekend in

Berlin as she suggested. It was pride's last refuge, to keep his wounds in hiding, not to cry out.

Where was Frau Spühler, what was every one doing in this damned house? In the sharp attack of loneliness he would have welcomed old Spühler himself, old Spühler with the eternal question floating on his eternal grin. "Well well, any luck to-day, Herr Meisel?" He took off his shoes—one of them had a nail sticking up—pushed them into a corner and limped across the hall in his socks. The girl Minna, meeting him there, thought, 'How angry Herr Meisel looks to-day!' Like a leopard, she thought, a wounded leopard. Yes, he was just like a leopard, thin and self-contained, with a rather surreptitious pride, the small eyes scowling.

He stopped abruptly when he saw her.

"Didn't you hear me call? I want my house-shoes."

"I put them in your room, Herr Meisel. Yes, I did clean them—this morning."

"Where is everybody?" he asked. "Where's Frau Spühler got to?"

She started to answer but a fit of coughing took her and made her speechless. Oh, damn the girl! Was there no one in this place who could even answer a plain question. "You ought to see a doctor!" he said, but she didn't hear him. He went on upstairs.

They had the wardrobe athwart the passage now, and Frau Rupf, jammed in a corner behind it, was uttering explosive little sarcasms as quickly as her hard, small mind could form them. Herr Spühler was still in the same position, fixed like a figure of stone in the attitude of one about to dive through the floor.

"If only you could move just a few inches to one side," Professor Rupf said reasonably, "then we could cant the thing over and slide it forward obliquely."

"I am not standing like this just to admire the view," was all Herr Spühler answered.

"If you can release me by supper-time," Frau Rupf said stonily, "I shall be perfectly content. Otherwise, perhaps you would bring me my night-things."

Frau Spühler stopped weeping to stare at Frau Rupf disdainfully. She said:

"You can't undress there, with my husband only a few inches away."

"Then you must either remove your husband or put up a small screen."

"Patience, ladies, patience!" the Professor said sadly. "We must try to tackle the problem reasonably. When once we have the wardrobe out of the way we can attend to the disposal of the population."

"Long before that my husband will be dead," Frau Spühler retorted.

Frau Rupf smiled coldly.

"Well, we have a doctor here to do the post mortem. All we shall want is an undertaker."

A quiet, stiff voice asked:

"Just what is happening to my wardrobe?"

The silence that came was the silence of schoolboys at the special jerk of a door-handle. Josef, twisting round, saw a young man with the figure of a delicate boy, a face of almost middle-aged maturity; eyes whose stare was like a flat, wide beam of light.

It was the Professor who first got his tongue loose:

"You might say, Herr Meisel, that everything has happened to your wardrobe except what we want to happen. It persistently objects to going through this door."

"And why should it?"

"Ah, that is Herr Spühler's affair."

From the stiff, doubled trunk of Herr Spühler a voice said uneasily:

"You must ask my wife, it's something she fixed up."

Meisel's eyes, moving round upon Frau Spühler, set

her into speech some five seconds before she intended; and the words came wrong:

"I thought—I thought perhaps you would like the other room. It gets the sun—it gets the sun in the early morning. Just a change, I thought—I knew you wouldn't mind. At least, I thought perhaps it was more suitable."

"More suitable?"

She opened her mouth again, but nothing came at all now. Erich Meisel said coolly, carefully:

"So you've decided to move me into another room? Wouldn't it have been more courteous to consult me before shifting my things?"

The question was pushed at Frau Spühler alone. But every one felt guilty.

"Perhaps we could adjourn to the dining-room and discuss the matter there, in an amiable spirit," Rupf began.

"I personally am unable to adjourn anywhere," his wife said. "And Herr Spühler does not seem very adjournable."

But Frau Spühler had been given time to arrange her mind now.

"It's nothing to do with me," she said boldly. "It was the Doctor's idea."

"The Doctor's?"

"That gentleman."

Josef saluted. "Doctor Zeppichmann!"

Erich had barely noticed him. Dr. Zeppichmann, good God! A flourishing Senior Boy from the agricultural labourers' orphanage.

"So you think my health requires the early morning sun, Herr Doktor?"

Josef smiled. He liked a joke, even when he couldn't quite get his mind round it. Amiably, a little nervously, he said:

"This room here, you see, it's specially suitable for some

research work I'm doing. I have agreed to pay Frau Spühler a special rate to secure my choice of room, and I felt certain you would see that the new arrangement is—quite reasonable. Actually that room is in some ways a better one. As Frau Spühler says, it catches the early sun."

He stopped there, because you cannot go on talking to a man whose back is turned to you. And Erich was already addressing Herr Spühler.

"You know, this is by no means a perfect boarding-house, but as places of this kind go I've always thought it was run on fairly sensible lines. Perhaps I'm over-scrupulous, but isn't it rather surprising, after lodging here for three years, to find that a total stranger has jumped in from nowhere and helped himself to my room? Or is it just your ordinary practice to get hold of your guests' private property and bundle it about? Possibly you're under the impression that I only hire a room to sleep in! As for my wardrobe, which happens to have been built by one of the finest cabinet-makers in Germany, I suppose if it gets in your way at all you're at liberty to pitch it into the street! Or have you any reasonable explanation to offer?"

Frau Rupf sighed. "How that young man does talk!"

"Quiet, Trude!"

"Have you any explanation?" Erich repeated. "Why can't you answer me? What are you standing there for in that idiotic way?"

Herr Spühler spoke then. It was Erich's remark about pitching the wardrobe into the street which had mainly provoked him. (Pitch that wardrobe?—let young Meisel try it!) But the personal insult ripped off the coat of decorous restraint which he had worn for his guests these fourteen years.

"Herr Meisel," he suddenly barked, "when you have paid the six weeks' rent you owe me for your room it will be time enough for you to insult my wife and myself. Mean-

while, this is a house, let me tell you, for respectable guests. It is not a charity-home for ruffianly paupers."

A moment of stillness, a moment when the noises from the street seemed to be still. White and shaking, Erich made a step towards Herr Spühler. But a hand stopped him: Josef's.

"One moment, Herr Meisel," Josef said. "Listen please! If I was to advance something towards your arrears, that would make everything all right, wouldn't it? That would be a reasonable settlement, don't you think?"

Erich stared at Josef for an instant; their faces only a few inches apart. Said nothing. Pushed through to the small room at the end and slammed the door.

Along the passage, shuffling in her loose slippers, came the girl Minna.

"Herr Meisel was saying he wanted his house-shoes. Shall I get them and take them to his new room?"

No one answered her.

DR. WILDELAU sent down a note to Dr. Röstel:

‘The young man I mentioned will report to you tomorrow morning. His name is Zeppichmann. I have already interviewed him.

‘Zeppichmann is, I think, a keen youngster, and more intelligent than his rather homely outlines suggest. He should work hard, under careful supervision. On the other hand, I ought to warn you that his success in examinations seems to have given him a slightly exaggerated view of his attainments in Medicine. I suggest that this error in self-appreciation may be rectifiable, without any discouragement of proper keenness, by the concentration of Zeppichmann’s energies on that part of the Ward routine which is proper to a junior man.’

Dr. Röstel showed the note to Dr. Dittmer.

“At any rate I hope he will be tidy,” Röstel said.

“Yes yes,” Dittmer agreed, “I think tidiness is the one really important thing in all scientific work”; and went away to his own regions, where he could laugh out loud.

The Moltke Hospital catered for all the ailments recognised by medical science, and even for some which, refusing classification, are not recognised. But the Staff suffered from one disease, virulent and infectious, an encompassing mania for tidiness. It is needful to be tidy, in a place which gathers all the damaged bodies from a thousand square miles. A new in-patient arrives, on the average, once in every three hours; but they don’t come at three-hourly intervals—a dozen or twenty may turn up at once. A new case has to be examined, cleaned, put to bed. That means records, towels,

bedclothes—fifty different material things, as well as the exact application of labour; and one has to find these things in a hurry. The demands of the machine do not cease while emergencies are covered. Cases get hungry, run up temperatures, require the slipper, require medicine, die; irrespective of the Staff's convenience. So if some one fails to put a bottle of iodine back in the proper place the noise of complaint sounds far. *It must go back in the proper place!* The injunction becomes a motto, a war-cry, a permanent knot in the brain. The foot of a bed just out of alignment, some one's thermometer left on a dressing-trolley: these things, in the Moltke mind, were like pictures hung crooked. You could not rest, you could not get on with what you were doing, till the emblem of chaos had been reduced to order and somebody soundly lectured.

Dr. Röstel had come to the hospital on a six months' appointment in 1922, and still meant to find a less exhausting post as soon as he had cleared up an interesting pyelitis case in Ward 14, a hobnail liver in Ward 6. He suffered from the disease in its most acute form. Dr. Röstel had a motto of his own, 'Only the patient matters,' and its application kept him in a smouldering frenzy. With his intense shyness, he never looked at a patient's face, seldom addressed one except conventionally; but as he passed through a ward a little moan, a catching of the breath, would make him pull up in a kind of panic distress. "Sister! Nurse! That man's head is too high. You must take one pillow away. No, that's too low now, you must find a shallower pillow." And then, "This spittoon, when was it last emptied? A spittoon shouldn't be left for more than an hour. This record card, it's not been entered up this morning. Nine o'clock. Where's the senior nurse? That window's too far open, there's a draught along these beds. What's that over there? Look, my girl, look! That clout. Who left it there? What's it doing there? A cleaning rag on a patient's bed, I've never heard of

such a thing—don't you realise these things are alive with bacilli!"

So this what's-his-name, this new young man, Zeppichmann, about whom Röstel saw nothing at all remarkable one way or the other, this Zeppichmann had got to be tidy. And ah, God, the number of qualified hobbledehoys that had turned up in these twenty years to borrow Röstel's stethoscope without permission and amble about the wards in dirty overalls and leave their notebooks on the bedtables!

"I am sure," he said, "I am sure, Doctor— Doctor Zepp—Zepp—I am sure, Doctor, we shall work very happily together." Washing his hands once again, his knees bent with rheumatism, his round, cosy little stomach pressed against the basin, he smiled in his friendliest way at the cold tap. "All I ask is that you should be methodical. Methodical, clean in your work, wash hands between the wards, not leave things about, you know. That other man I had, young what's-his-name, Werner—Werner-something, about four years ago, nice fellow, clever, he used to take out his dentures, always said they weren't comfortable, used to put them down and leave them all over the place. I found them on a patient's bed once. A pneumonia case. Just imagine that! A man with lobar pneumonia, about forty-eight hours to live, thinking over his past life no doubt. Suddenly he looks up and sees the doctor's teeth on his bed. I told Werner, Werner-whatever-it-was, I think his name was something like that, I said, 'Only the patient matters.' That's a thing I'd like you to remember: *Only the patient matters*. I said to Werner-whatever-it-was, 'If your dentures aren't comfortable you'd better leave them with the porter when you arrive and get a receipt for them.' Well now, come along to the post-mortem room and I'll show you a liver which I think will interest you. A rather fascinating cirrhosis. It belonged to such a sweet old lady, died on Monday, came from

Dresden. Would you mind going back and just shutting that door! With the handle. It doesn't have to be slammed."

So that was this man's kink, Josef thought. Tidiness. Ah well!

And four days later Dr. Röstel found that all the drawers in his instrument cabinet had been elegantly labelled, and a separate hook had been screwed on to the door for Zeppichmann's overall, and on Zeppichmann's table stood a wooden box, neatly home-made, with the rudiments of a patients' index.

It was observed in the Wards also that the new doctor was a tidy person, in the Moltke tradition. For a day or two this awkward, over-scrubbed young man in the very new overall was seen to trail after Röstel as dumb and sombrely as an aged sheepdog. It got about that he was an undertaker's apprentice, making mental notes for the size of coffins. But presently the tame creature began to move a little way from his master, to straighten somebody's bed clothes, push a chair into its proper place, dust some crumbs off a bedside table. That was significant: Dr. Röstel would have found crumbs on the blades of an electric fan. And presently the new doctor was calling, nervously but not unobtrusively, 'Nurse, this medicine glass, it's empty I think. I thought—perhaps you didn't realize it had been left here.'

That was a treat for the patients. Old Kleinsucker, one-eyed and toothless, dying of pulmonary cancer in Ward 10, called hoarsely to his neighbour, "Hey! Heinrich! What about the new doctor! It's bitten him, ay, it's got him all right, the same bouncing bug! Must have the bolsters straight, must have the pots in a straight line. See him squinting at your heat-map up there? Didn't like the line so twisty, that's what it was. You'll have to get it straight, son, or they'll have you in the hack-up shop. Won't let you go on with a wobbly line like that, not the new boy won't." But Nurse Laupert regarded the manifestations with less amuse-

ment. "If Doctor Röstel wants to fuss about medicine-glasses, let him!" she said to her friend Elsa. "We must think of his mental health, poor thing, and if he didn't find something to madden him in every ward he'd go completely crazy. But if this flat-headed cub out of the potato-patch thinks it's my job to go round keeping medicine glasses out of his Holy eyesight . . . We've got as many fusspots here as we can get on with . . . And who the devil, I'd like to know, has pinched my midwifery manual!"

No, they were not agreeably impressed by this young Dr. Zeppichmann, that company of people who hurried all day across the parquet floors of the Moltke Hospital, whose common element was the fierce hygienic draught that swept through every ward, the eternal stench of carbolic. Yet no one could deny that he was a worker. Solemn, officious, he had a way of slipping into one of the wards without being noticed. A nurse tidying a patient at one end would suddenly hear his flat, chesty voice: "I'd better leave the leg as it is. If it goes on hurting I'll come back and do it this evening." And there was the new doctor, bent over a bed with the examination-lamp fixed on the headrail, swiftly undoing a bandage. And then, standing awkwardly with his eyes toward his boots, he would pay out a string of instructions.

"I'd like you to dress that arm again before you go off duty, Nurse, just as I've done it. Fresh vaseline. Don't touch the leg, I want to do that myself. About 6 T, in the corner there: I'm sending a chit to the dispensary as soon as I've checked it with Doctor Röstel. The stuff will be down at four and you're to give the first dose immediately. She may vomit some time afterwards; if that happens I want you to note the exact time and quantity of the vomit, and send a tabbed specimen to Doctor Herbst. He will report to me. I shall be here at 6.30, to give the second dose myself. Now about the next bed, 6 U . . ."

In the Staff Mess it was the same. At luncheon the re-

cruit sat earnest and silent, methodically enveloping fork-loads as if he were fattening himself for market, always with Schraube's *Cases in Phthisis* on the table beside him. If young Ahlwarth asked, "What's on your mind, Zeppichmann? Your sins or your kidneys?" he answered gravely, "It's a case in the throat ward, I'm very worried about it." And afterwards, when Röstel was having his one treat of the day, twenty minutes' chess with Dittmer, he would feel a tap on his shoulder.

"You must excuse me, Doctor, I wanted just to consult you about that membranous croup in 14. I want to inject again, but I don't care to do it without your permission. Perhaps if you could just run up and look at it now, then you could give me your advice before you go over to the surgical wing . . ."

"Well," Dittmer said, when he met Röstel again, "that new tool-sharpener of yours, is he tidy?"

Röstel nodded gloomily.

"Tidy? Yes. Yes, there's no doubt about it. The neatest man I ever had. Never forgets anything. Always returns my instruments when he borrows them. Never leaves his dentures on the beds."

"Aha," Dittmer said, nursing his thin hands, "then you're in luck's way! Gracious Providence has looked favourably upon the good Doctor Röstel, his prayer for a tidy man is answered at last."

"Yes," said Röstel, with unusual energy. "Yes, damn and blast it!"

"Indeed? Indeed? Can there be some unheard of failing in this divinely tidy boy?"

"There can. He treats the patients as if they were cows."

"Is that—technically undesirable?"

"All research people talk like you do," Röstel said grumpily. "You think that real doctoring's just a joke, you

think the only important thing is to marry bacilli and watch them copulating in your dirty little tubes."

Dittmer stretched his cheek-bones.

"My dear Röstel, why such acerbity? I am but a serving-maid in the outer courts of philosophy, and you talk as if I were the Director of the Berlin Underground Railway. I was only asking what could possibly be wrong with this most exceptional Doctor-Röstel-assistant. Is he rough with the corpses?"

Gathering his words laboriously, as one whose tongue is his least responsive member, Röstel said:

"That Zeppichmann, that great bull-calf that His Majesty Doctor Wildelau has plumped down on my stomach, he thinks of nothing but his work."

"My dear Röstel," Dittmer protested, "you really must be more selective in your use of metaphors. Just now you said that he treated the patients as if they were cows."

Röstel grunted. This Dittmer, this well-meaning trainer of bacilli, had a single fault: he was forever knitting up the most incomprehensible jokes.

"Thinks of nothing but his work!" he repeated.

"That is terrible!" Dittmer said. "A new assistant house-surgeon in the Moltke Hospital, a young man with all his professional life before him, he ought to be thinking about wine, about the colour of his tie, about horses and girls. To think about his work all day long, it's unforgivable! You, for example, my dear colleague, I know you spend all your time thinking whether you can afford an electric horn for your motorcycle."

"You don't understand me, Karl. Of course, yes, it's quite right for a young man to think about his work. But he should—I don't know, I can't put it into words—he ought to have some other interest, some philosophy. A man ought to be a human being, when all's said and done."

Dittmer frowned.

"That is rather a daring hypothesis. The House-Matron on the medical side, if she proved to be a human being I should lose all faith in divine taxonomy."

"No, but don't you see, he ought to think about his work as part of his life. The most important part, of course. As it is, he only thinks of life as part of his work. He eats his dinner just to give him strength enough to pull out somebody's tonsils."

"Dear me! And I suppose if he ate a very big dinner his strength would be such that the patient's bowels would be dragged up too?"

"I shouldn't mind if he took some sort of interest in the source of the tonsils. He just doesn't notice the patients at all, they are merely specimens of dilapidation for him to practise on. Why you, you whose whole business in life is to juggle with bottles, I believe you would be less detached than he is. Yesterday he came to tell me about a gangrened finger in Ward 10. I asked, whose finger, and he said Herr Güttler's. I said, 'Do you mean *Frau* Güttler's?' and he said, 'Oh yes, now I come to think of it, it is a woman.' Just fancy that!"

"It shows a wonderful purity of mind," Dittmer said. He stubbed his cigarette on Röstel's enamel table and steered vaguely towards the door, moving his stiff legs like a pair of compasses.

"At any rate," he said, "the boy is tidy. That is a great virtue."

It was a virtue not much exemplified in Dittmer's own regions. He himself had started the research department at a time when the Moltke Hospital, aloof in its great tradition of good nursing and sound application of proved methods, had still regarded bacteriological research as the eccentric trade of long-haired chemists at the universities. He had been given an old laundry at the very end of the north building and 3000 Marks to spend on 'such tables, chemicals, etc.,

as may be proved necessary for such investigations.' The department cost thirty thousand a year now, but Wildelau still thought of it as an extravagance, perhaps justifiable because it gave the hospital publicity of a fashionable kind. It was still in the laundry, the benches converted from ironing tables were still used, the drying racks and one of the old boilers had never been moved. What Dittmer did with his thirty thousand Wildelau could never quite understand.

Appropriately, a corridor some forty yards long divided this hunting ground of Dr. Dittmer's from the respectable part of the establishment. Wildelau traversed this corridor seldom, disliking any part of his kingdom where he could not successfully catechise; Röstel hardly went there at all. It was a shabby passage, which the painters always overlooked, and as you went along it the tang of overriding hygiene altered remarkably to the mustiness of houses long deserted, rotting wood, mice, damp distemper. The door you came to was hung with motheaten baize; it had been fixed ostensibly to protect the penetrating labours of Dr. Dittmer's mind from the vulgar racket of convalescence. You went through this door and through a second, the old laundry door with a loose thumb-latch, and then the Moltke Hospital had disappeared altogether.

Here Dr. Dittmer felt at home.

It was a little after eight o'clock when Josef, paying his first visit, carefully closed the laundry-door behind him to make it whine as little as possible. The big room was full of brown steam, through which a naked bulb, hung jauntily from a loose flex at the farther end, showed like a November sunrise. To the left, through a jungle of glass and iron, he saw a second light, a yellow pool depending from a poke of cardboard; beneath, a patch of shiny serge stretched over a giant pair of buttocks. He went that way.

"Can you tell me," he asked politely, "if Doctor Dittmer is by any chance still at work?"

The man he spoke to turned round slowly and took off his pince-nez. It was a stout, lugubrious schoolboy of forty with his chin a week unshaved.

"Be careful where you're standing," he said. "Those flasks are full of nitric, and that box by your left foot has got Dittmer's favourite rats. They hate excitement. You don't mind my telling you? We haven't got the elbow room those people in the hack-and-dope departments have. Just wait a minute while I write down something. What's seven nines? Ah, I knew it was either that or fifty-four. You haven't by any chance got a pencil on you? . . . Dittmer? Well, he was messing about not long ago. I saw him—when was it? Look here, if there's anybody charting readings over there, by the boiler, that would be him."

Josef went over there, and found Dittmer in his shirt-sleeves: a man stretched out to five-foot-ten, with hair like a puff of smoke, whose grey eyes looked at the world with a tourist's tolerance.

"I don't know what time it is," Dittmer said without looking round, "but if you've come to wash the floor I can tell you straight away that the floor doesn't want washing and as long as I'm in charge of this department it will not be washed. Now look here," he continued, "this is rather interesting. This curve, look—you see the way the bumps come? Now the odd thing is this: every bump corresponds with an injection; but only alternate injections give the fluctuation. Why? There's no sense in it that I can see. Can you tell me? Who are you, by the way? Oh yes, you're Röstel's new assistant."

Josef's eyes were fixed on the chart. "Of course," he said, "I don't know what you're injecting. But I had a similar curve once, and it simply proved that each second injection—or third in my case—was negatived by the one preceding."

"Yes yes, of course it shows that. But why? And if

Number 2 in the series gives no reaction, why does Number 3 give a hell of a reaction? Look at that—it's like an Alpine crag! Wait, I'll show you the formula, then you'll see what I mean. Formula—what have I done with the damned thing!" He shouted, "Korbenhaus! Have you seen a bit of yellow paper, about the shape of a wishbone?"

Korbenhaus shouted back: "With figures on it?"

"Of course, you blockhead!"

"I saw it on the floor, near the fume-cupboard. I expect the cleaners swept it up."

"Hellhounds!" said Dittmer. "Ah well, it may turn up. Listen to me, Zeppichmann! The world is divided into people who work and people whose only business is to stop others working." He swept his hand over the huge disorder which filled the room, wooden boxes stacked on the benches, bottles all over the floor, cages everywhere. "Every single day some busybody comes nosing round my poor little department, upsetting everything. To-morrow morning when I come in I shall find those filthy cleaners have got all this stuff into a hopeless muddle. Tell me, what do you think of my old friend Röstel?"

"He's a splendid man to work under," Josef said. "A most inspiring doctor."

Dittmer started.

"Inspiring? Good God! Yes yes, you're perfectly right, I'm sure. Poor old Röstel—most inspiring, I don't doubt it. But just listen a moment. When you come in here I don't want you making little cupboards and putting up hooks all over the place and labelling all the cages. That only wastes time and puts people out of temper. Half the sorrow in the world springs from people going to a drawer labelled 'Fancy Shirts' and finding it full of neckties. If people didn't label drawers you wouldn't expect to find anything special in them and you wouldn't be disappointed. Where was I? Yes, this one, temperature at the fourteenth injection, Thursday

6.30 P.M. D'you mind standing back a bit, you're giving me a shadow. I can't see why some one doesn't rig these lights so as you can see something. Now you're stepping on my phial-rack. Never mind!"

"Perhaps I could visit you some time when you're less busy," Josef suggested.

Dittmer frowned.

"Forty-eight-point-seven, fifty-one-point-three. Oh yes, what was it you wanted?"

"I—I have Doctor Wildelau's permission to ask if you would be so kind as to allow me to come here occasionally. I mean, to work here. I mean, I thought I might possibly be of some use to you in odd ways, scrubbing the benches, that sort of thing." He saw Dittmer shudder, and skidded on: "No, I don't mean that, I never interfere with things. But I thought I might learn how to prepare nutrient media for you, that might be helpful, I thought, and then perhaps later on I could have part of a bench to do a few experiments of my own. I am—I am just a bit interested in the tubercle bacillus."

"You'd better go over to Doctor Vollmuth and ask to have a look at his patients," Dittmer said. "You can see T.B. in action there. And my God how it acts! A pleasant afternoon-off for you."

Josef nodded.

"Doctor Vollmuth, yes! I haven't had the pleasure of meeting him yet—perhaps you could introduce me one day in the Staff Mess? I suppose—I suppose Doctor Vollmuth sometimes makes tests with preparations you send him?"

"Doctor Vollmuth," said Dittmer, "has not yet been known to admit that tuberculosis is caused by bacilli. As far as I know, he believes it's caused by certain conjunctions of the planets. They're all like that in the hospital out there. They believe that disease can be charmed away by good-humour and tidiness and tact. When I talk to them about

genuine scientific methods they think that I'm plotting to take away their living. Now you really must go away, I can't stay chattering all night, it disturbs my rats. Yes yes, come again by all means, yes yes, I suppose I can find somewhere for you to play the fool, heaven knows where, I've so many youngsters in here I've hardly a square yard to call my own. But you're not to meddle with things, mind! I don't want any one making a mess of this place . . ."

Next day the telephone rang in the Research Department, and Dittmer, having moved a stack of cases to get to it, unravelled the receiving wire.

"Hullo hullo hullo!" he said. "Whatever you want isn't ready yet, and if you don't want anything why waste my time!"

The precise, courteous voice of Dr. Vollmuth answered him.

"There is a young man here, his name seems to be Zeppichmann. He tells me he is doing some work for you, and that you have sent him to examine some of my cases in order to prepare some kind of thesis for your inspection. Is that—correct?"

Dittmer let off three great barks of delight.

"I beg your pardon?" Vollmuth said. "I fancy there is something wrong with my instrument."

"It's not me that sent him," Dittmer roared. "It's the devil himself who sends Herr Zeppichmann to try the virtue of honest doctors. Put him to bed, I should, give him some of your open-air treatment! He'll probably make a first-class case for you if you work at him patiently. God bless your efforts, worthy Doctor Vollmuth!"

Vollmuth pulled down his waistcoat and smiled politely. So Dittmer was in one of his boisterous moods: those bugs of his, real or imaginary, they got into a man's brain. He went back to his waiting-room.

"I find that Doctor Dittmer has changed his plans," he

said to Josef. "I regret very much that we cannot show you round this department at the present time, as we happen to be working under unusual pressure. Perhaps in the summer we shall not be quite so busy, and Doctor Wildelau may be disposed to arrange a visit by some of the junior members of the staff. I hope I may have the pleasure of meeting you again."

Outside it was cold but sunny. The beds, fifty of them, each with a scarlet over-blanket, stretched all the way along the terrace, eight feet apart, in perfect line. The patients watched the stolid young man in overalls as he marched slowly past them, bound for the main block; his heavy face important and preoccupied. In the tedium that stretched ahead like a new motor road any such event was welcome: a bird that swooped to pick up a crumb, a young doctor passing. A woman smiled at him, but he did not appear to see her.

He went in at the east door and his own world re-formed about him: new, but already familiar, the pervading carbolic, the grey distemper. He picked his way without thinking through the labyrinth of staircase and corridor. They were quickly at-home, the Zeppichmanns. A bed trolley went by, a floor-boy hurried past with a chit for the dispensary, a door opened and some one called loudly for Nurse Henschel. From the door of 11 Sister Dietert appeared. "I should like you to see Herr Stache, Doctor, there's a change in the breathing I don't like." But before he had got there a nurse came with a message. "Doctor Röstel has just telephoned, he would be glad if you would go to help him in 15. As quickly as you can."

So: he fitted in. But his thoughts were on the line of beds along the terrace. A grey-haired man, six from the end of the line: with a glance from his eye's tail he had noticed that one specially. He wanted that man. Just for twelve months.

AH WELL, the trouble was practically over, Frau Spühler thought. They had bought a reading chair to go in Herr Meisel's room. It came from the Metropol Stores, where you really got very nice things for about half what they charged you at Berghauer's. Really it was a pretty chair, as well as sensible; the back in tapestry, with a motif of flowers; wallflowers, Frau Spühler thought, though Professor Rupf maintained they were geraniums. Herr Meisel had said 'thank-you,' though not very graciously. And Frau Spühler had wept a little, reminding Herr Meisel that she had lost her only child in infancy, and that it wasn't easy for honest people to get along nowadays, with meat so costly and something would have to be done about the damp patch over the door in the dining-room.

Since then, Herr Meisel had gradually come out of his sulks. He talked a little at meals now, in his oldish, knowing way: there were things going on in the country that they knew nothing about, he told them. Ah yes, he heard things when he went to his club, that club of his where he spent so much of his time. And once more Frau Spühler was warmed by a little pride in having this young Berlin gentleman as her guest, this young man of excellent family who seemed to know all about what was really going on.

But when Dr. Zeppichmann was about, Herr Meisel did not talk. His eyes, gripping the cracked vegetable dish were the eyes of a man unjustly in the pillory.

Happily, it was Dr. Zeppichmann's custom to hurry through his meals, excuse himself, and bound away to his own room; where, having locked the door, he did unimagi-

nable things with the tubes and bottles which seemed to multiply every day.

"It is not my idea of a doctor," Herr Spühler said, pouring out more water for Herr Barthol. "A doctor is supposed to go round and see people, or else the people come to him. He takes the pulsations of the heart, he sees if the tongue is correctly adjusted, he prescribes the appropriate drugs and lotions. This mixing up of medicines, that's a pharmacist's business. Old Julius Gehrmann round the corner, he can do that sort of thing. And he's a man of practically no education at all—gave me wrong change for a five-Mark note only yesterday."

"Still, he seems to be a hard-working young man," Professor Rupf said.

His wife raised her shoulders.

"It's one way to get a reputation for industry," she said. "To shut yourself up and lock the door. Probably he's reading the feuilletons."

"There's hardly anything in his room except doctors' journals," Frau Spühler said cautiously. The tide of her maternity, flowing so readily to any man under thirty who had not his own mother about him, was already lapping Dr. Zeppichmann's rocky shores. "Sometimes he looks to me as if he's lonely."

"If Doctor Zeppichmann cared to keep his door unlocked," Frau Rupf answered, "then we could all go in and comfort him. As it is, we might sing choruses in the corridor outside. That's about the best we can do."

"I see there has been street-fighting in Halberstadt," Herr Barthol said boldly.

Frau Spühler glanced at him gratefully. Herr Barthol was always ready to rescue her from the needle-blows of Frau Rupf. Not that Frau Rupf was an unkind person: Frau Spühler did not believe that any one was really unkind. But being the wife of a professor Frau Rupf was naturally an

intellectual; some people said she knew even more than the Professor himself; and an intellectual had a way of hurting an ordinary person, without meaning to, just as men with big boots had to tread on your toes in the tramcar.

"It is a sign of restlessness," Herr Barthol added. "Whenever I hear of street-fighting I say to myself, 'Ah, that means some kind of discontentment among the common people!'"

He drank the rest of his water, dried the underside of his moustache with two pouncing blows of his handkerchief and looked round defiantly for questions. 'Herr Barthol, he is the very image of the Emperor,' they had said in Ülzwalk, where he had been one of the leading figures in the bakery business; and now, at sixty-seven, he looked as much a cavalryman as ever, the smallish body held so stiff that it seemed gigantic, the eyebrows abundant and ferocious, the cleft chin as tight and stony as a boxer's knuckles.

"Discontentment!" he repeated. "I don't mind saying, in this circle of friends, it would be a good thing for the country if certain people I could name had a rope put round their necks. Yes, that's what I'd do. I'd tie the rope myself. Frau Spühler," he added, "I should like to say, with your permission, that this has been an admirable dinner."

Herr Spühler nodded.

"You'd have to be sure and use the right sort of knot," he said. "It isn't as easy as you think. I saved a man's life once by knowing the right kind of knot. That was at Helsingfors, in March 1907."

"But Herr Barthol doesn't want to save any one's life," Frau Rupf objected. "Just the contrary."

"In the navy you learn a great many things," Frau Spühler explained. "My husband obtained all kinds of useful information, and many different abilities." She faltered, eager to push her man's prestige a little higher still, but feeling on her face the damp stare of Frau Rupf's pale eyes.

"The cold tap in the kitchen is leaking again," she concluded.

Herr Spühler understood her.

"Last time, I had a crick in my back for weeks," he said. "Why did the man put the main cock in such a ridiculous place! Right against the wall, only six inches between the wall and the tank. A naval tradesman would have put it the other side of the floorboards."

"You mean, in the sea?" Frau Rupf asked.

Herr Barthol said slowly: "Cramp in the back has a rheumatic origin. It is a rheumatic condition of the kidneys. One of the evils brought about by our civilization, which is the highest in the history of the world, is that we have forgotten the art of mastication. Goats, for example. Can you remember seeing a goat with a crick in its back?"

Frau Rupf shut her eyes, scouring her memory. She would have liked to say she had, but a certain honesty always forbade her to invent an experience she could not imagine completely and in detail.

Professor Rupf could not picture it either.

"On the other hand," he said, "it may be argued that our eating is more aesthetic, visually, than that of the goat. When I watch a goat nibbling I always find myself moved towards laughter. But to watch my wife's lips as she discusses an apple gives me nothing but pleasure."

"I agree, yes, of course I agree!" Herr Barthol said quickly. "But surely you must admit that this tearing over the roads in motor cars is a sign that we have lost something of our ancient simplicity."

With this Frau Spühler agreed.

"Ah yes, the war," she said stoutly, "the country has never been the same since then."

The door behind her was not quite shut, and in the mirror above the sofa she caught sight of an untidy head, the head of the girl Minna, peeping round to see if she could

come and clear away. Well, Minna would have to wait. The philosophical conversation between Herr Barthol and Herr Professor Rupf should not be interrupted.

A cosy hour such as this made up to Frau Spühler for many hardships. Her husband, with all his versatility, had never achieved a fortune. He could fit a new tap-washer, shine up an old saucepan to make it like new; he had made a little shed in the yard for his bicycle, with a shelf for the oil-can, he had once re-distempered a part of the attic. But since his retirement no one had ever come forward to offer him employment. It is a trial of virtue, when you dream of a delicious place of your own, to have a house full of strangers; people who come in at curious times expecting a meal, who shift the furniture in their rooms, leaving ugly patches on the wall where it stood before; to watch the milk-bill mounting, to face every Saturday the business of explaining to Frau Rupf the little entries on her account for extras. But it made a difference if you called these strangers your friends.

And they were gentlefolk, these guests of hers: all of them, until Dr. Zeppichmann's arrival; and he, after all, was a Doctor, which counted for much the same thing. Gentlefolk, and people of intellectual distinction. All her life Frau Spühler had yearned for culture, for the larger philosophy of worlds outside her own. And here, at her table, was Professor Rupf, who had been to Venice, who in his simplest observations used words she did not understand. And here was Herr Barthol, with his Potsdamer dignity, once a leading personality in commerce, a man whose knowledge of practical affairs gave him status to argue with the Professor on equal terms. Sometimes dear August yawned a little, as the two thinkers plodded side by side along the heavy course of cosmic learning; yawned, and undid his waistcoat, and made small stomach noises, altogether permissible in a sailing man. But across Frau Spühler's gentle

mind this flow of long, rich words passed with the cleansing grace of her own dusting mop, sweeping away the little webs of trouble, the grocer's bill, the awkwardness about Minna burning Frau Rupf's undergarment. In this hour she was lady of her house, she was mistress of a salon; and if her active part in the conversazione was small, she felt that some genius of her own, a special sympathy with adventurous minds, shone out like morning sun to warm her company's powers.

"My old friend Otto Richtenberger," Herr Barthol was saying, "he used to have a large trade in Brussels. Ornamental iron lampstands, tremendous strength, you could sit on the top of them and they wouldn't bend. He had a turnover of two thousand Marks a month—the Belgian trade alone, that was. Tremendous strength! You could sit on top of them. And very handsome. And this year, if you'll believe me, not one! Trade gone to nothing. Now tell me this: why?"

Frau Rupf, who never entirely understood the art of conversation, said:

"I suppose the Belgians don't like that sort of thing any more."

Happily Herr Barthol did not seem to hear her.

"Government!" he said shrewdly. "I don't mind saying that some of the things I've heard would surprise you." He leant towards Herr Rupf, glancing quickly to see if the others would overhear him. "They fix it up," he said, "they fix it all up with the Communists. It suits their book, you see, to keep us a beaten country. Suits the social-democrats too—a strong country wouldn't put up with them, not for five minutes. Well, you see how it goes! My friend Otto Richtenberger, he goes to see his old customer in Brussels. 'No good!' this man says. 'The public doesn't want that kind of thing nowadays. All electric stuff is what they're using.'

Now listen! Do you think he'd say that to a French manufacturer?"

Frau Spühler caught sight of danger. When it came to politics Herr Barthol was a hard fighter; there was always a chance of his grazing the sensibilities of those less ardently convinced.

"I am sure Herr Richtenberger's lamp-stands must be very attractive," she said, "as well as useful."

"That's just what I mean!" Herr Barthol said. The graceful adam's-apple in Professor Rupf's throat began to bob, showing that he had a sentence ready.

"Yes, they may call us a beaten people," he said, "but the world still comes to us for our learning. In art, in science, in philosophy, we have always been the world's great teacher. Our learning is the greatest wealth we produce, and no one can prevent us from exporting it. Learning—and beauty"—he smiled at his wife, he bowed modestly towards Frau Spühler—"they are the staples of our national economy."

"But you can't live without selling something," Herr Barthol insisted.

Frau Spühler smiled at the Professor. Not because of his compliment, in which there might be a note of flattery, but as one who shared with him the subtle appreciation of cosmic values.

"Learning and beauty!" she repeated, feeling that by a special utterance of simple words she could invest them with new power. She pushed her chair back a few inches and leaned forward on the table; as once, a small, round, spectacled girl, she had leaned across the schoolroom desk, gulping the words of Herr Loeb, the geography teacher. In a few short sentences Professor Rupf had lifted their thoughts to a higher, more spiritual plane. And now, watching the mist of thoughtfulness in his gentle eyes, the scholar's smile which came to his lips almost without moving them,

she felt the glow of spirituality as if it were physical warmth, passing through breast and forehead.

It is like staying in a grand hotel, she obscurely thought.

But the grinding of a hinge, a little breeze stirring her thin back-hair, cut through the magic of her contentment. She knew, she felt him, that Herr Meisel was standing behind her.

"I am sorry to disturb you!"

His voice was that of a departed spirit, a weary spirit whom an unpractised medium has summoned by mistake.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Frau Spühler. I'm not asking for any favour, any special treatment, but on an evening when I happen to have a fairly severe headache it is really quite impossible to stand this noise."

"Noise?"

"You may not be aware that for the last twenty minutes the man who took my room from me has been hammering nails into the wall."

THEY waited till Herr Meisel had gone before settling who was to approach Dr. Zeppichmann. On the face of it, it seemed to be Herr Spühler's business. But Dr. Zeppichmann had been invited to the house by his wife, Herr Spühler said, and it was therefore her duty to conduct all subsequent negotiations.

"It's a thing for a man to deal with," Frau Spühler repeated.

Frau Rupf made a good suggestion.

"You, Herr Barthol," she said, "you are used to dealing with men. As a large employer you have learnt how to exert authority . . ."

"I have also learnt the principle of good manners," Herr Barthol said. "To assume the authority which belongs to our hosts would be a grave discourtesy to them."

"But really, Herr Barthol, we should take it as a favour," Frau Spühler pleaded. "It would be so much easier for you to put it to the doctor, as a fellow-guest . . ."

"I can think of nothing more likely to impress the young man than a visit from a gentleman of your presence," Herr Rupf added.

Herr Barthol made up his mind at last. If Frau Spühler would be good enough to show him which was Dr. Zeppichmann's room?

They went upstairs all together, Frau Spühler nervously leading, Herr Barthol grave and resolute behind her. "I feel," the Professor said, "that at times like these we are fortunate in having a man of Herr Barthol's experience to

represent us." Frau Spühler knocked gently on Dr. Zeppichmann's door.

"Is it anything important?" Josef called. "I'm very busy."

"Herr Barthol would be glad if you could spare him a few moments."

With their anxious ears close to the door they could not help hearing the Doctor mutter ferociously, "The devil take Herr Barthol!" Then:

"Perhaps Herr Barthol could manage some other time. I'm busy this evening."

This was said politely, but something in the voice told Herr Barthol that the politeness was superficial.

"Yes yes," he said quickly, "some other time will do very well." And to Frau Spühler, "I have just remembered that I must get a letter on the night mail—it is my sister's birthday to-morrow. I will—I will have a talk with Herr Doktor Zeppichmann later on, I shall explain to him the duties of a guest in a high-class boarding establishment."

Before he had reached his own room the hammering began again.

Herr Meisel's door had opened a little way. The diminished party could see Herr Meisel's pale face, his eyes coldly surveying them.

"This is intolerable," Frau Rupf whispered. "Arnold, you are to go in at once and give the young man a sound lecture."

In the Professor's gentle eyes, turned slowly round upon his wife's face, there came the shadow of a child's obstinacy.

"You mean, my precious, that I am to break down the door with an axe?"

"I mean that you're to try and see if the door's locked."

The Gods were against Professor Rupf. Josef had for-

gotten, this evening, to lock his door. Herr Rupf tried the handle and it swung right open.

"Go on!" his wife insisted.

"Good luck!" Herr Spühler whispered.

The Professor shook himself, as if to get some loose pieces of his body into the folds of his suit; went in and shut the door behind him.

To the party waiting outside he seemed to be gone a long time. They could just hear the two voices, chiefly Dr. Zeppichmann's, which was the louder and more determined. But presently the sounds grew fainter, almost to silence.

"It is really most kind of your husband," Frau Spühler whispered gratefully. "It is a very awkward thing to deal with, really I admire his courage."

"Probably the young doctor has poisoned him," Frau Rupf said curtly.

But it was the Professor whose voice they faintly heard now, and with his ear spread over the keyhole Herr Spühler could just make out what he was saying.

"... whether we can separate the notion of human personality from all the physical and mental attributes that seem to make it up. You, for example, spend your life with people whose bodies are in some way out of order; and probably you recognise all those people's moods as the effect of their illnesses. A man who would otherwise be good tempered is made sulky by kidney trouble, a vain woman is really one who feels inferior to others because her hearing is bad—that sort of thing. Now I myself am interested in race—I expect a Russian to behave in one way, an Italian in another, a Negro quite differently. And a man who studies heredity in individual families can forecast behaviour much more accurately still. You see what I'm driving at? I want to know whether I, Arnold Rupf, have anything that is peculiar to me, whether I am a personality uniquely created, or whether I am merely a common denominator, the meeting

place of various lines of natural causation. Do you ever wonder about that? I mean, with your patients for instance, do you ever try to detach the sick man from his sickness, to consider how far the complaint is part of his *persona* or how far it is something completely external, not an attribute but a detached phenomenon from which the patient can be separately considered?"

Then Josef's voice:

"Of course, yes, the mental attitude of the patient makes a great difference. We regard that as almost elementary—"

And that of Rupf again:

"No no, I don't think you quite understand me . . ."

Herr Spühler turned round to whisper his report:

"I can't make it out at all. The Professor seems to be going a long way round."

"Here, let me listen!" Frau Rupf pushed him firmly aside and put her own ear to the door. She heard Josef say:

"But women are altogether different. They don't live by thought at all, they live by their instincts. Or so I've always been told. As a matter of fact they don't interest me in the least."

"I can't quite agree with that," Herr Rupf said slowly. "I should agree that a woman is not capable of logical or continuous thought. She cannot consider any subject for two minutes without swerving off in another direction as a new idea chances to come into her head. Her mental processes are like a motor car without a driver in a field without any boundaries. In spite of that, I think that if you compare the human female with the lower animals you must agree that she is—by that standard—a cogitative being."

Obstructed by Frau Rupf, Frau Spühler could hear nothing.

"What is he saying?" she asked anxiously.

"He is saying," Frau Rupf replied a little testily, "that you and I are slightly better than hippopotamuses."

Another half hour had passed when Professor Rupf came out, and the corridor was empty. Seeing no light beneath his own door, he went slowly downstairs, smiling. Nearly forty years of schoolteaching, and still he believed in boys, in every fresh one that came into his field. The best of his pupils had often gone on to failure, or what he called failure: they had become acquisitive business men, or politicians of the more tawdry kind, or wooden-headed soldiers. One or two were in prison now. But that was somehow his own fault, he sadly thought. Give him a stocky child with the commonplace bullet head, arms shooting out of frayed cuffs, knees all muddy, and there was the raw material for scholarship as he understood it. You had but patiently to open his eyes, to let him look for a moment steadily on the mind's fair kingdom: its enormous liberty, the variety of its adventures: and surely he could never turn back to the Sodom of dullness. This young Zeppichmann, he had been too much in the laboratories; but his brain was alive, meticulous in the field he understood. There was rich soil between the stones, and in time Arnold Rupf would plant something there.

They were all in the kitchen, and with unusual condescension his wife was helping the Spühlers to do their weekly stock-taking. They talked, almost contentedly, of the price of food.

Frau Rupf did not look round when she heard the cluck of the latch. With an artist's concentration she went on ruling lines across the stock-book.

"How nice it is, Arnold," she said softly, "that at last you have an intellectual equal to talk to in the evenings. I expect you will learn a great deal from Herr Doktor Zeppichmann."

"Trude, you are a great silly!" he said. He came and

leant over her shoulder; not in the least guilty. "I think he is a young man who can be influenced. Quite uneducated, of course, like all scientists; but by no means a fool, and not, I fancy, unteachable."

His hands were on Frau Rupf's shoulders. She moved them away. She said:

"I suppose every one is teachable, except of course a born fool like your wife."

"Trude! My dear, what do you mean?"

"Have you put down two small tins of mustard?" Frau Spühler asked.

Getting no answer, she turned and saw her husband staring with canine interest at Frau Rupf; then Frau Rupf's face, scarlet; the Professor's, sorrowful and puzzled. She suddenly realized that a quarrel had started; unthinkable, a quarrel between a man and his wife, her guests.

"I am only sorry," Frau Rupf pursued, "that I take up so much of your time. If you didn't have to sit in our room reading your books all evening you could devote yourself to influencing intelligent young men—"

"But, Trude, my precious—"

"Listen!" she said sharply. "I can see how much you've influenced him already."

They listened. And heard, once more, the sound of steady hammering.

"I am afraid," Herr Rupf whispered, "I am afraid—I can't have made myself quite plain."

His wife snorted.

"You made yourself plain enough—"

For the second time in a single month—the second time in fourteen years—Herr Spühler's temper gave way.

"Enough!" he shouted. "I won't have women snapping and scratching in this kitchen." And then to Rupf, "You—you and this Zeppichmann, the devil take you both." A

little cry came from behind him, and he turned upon his wife. "Well, what are you whimpering for!"

The whimper stopped. For a moment she stared at the three faces with the ghastly curiosity of a bear when the trapper comes, then her head dropped and she wept without control.

It was arranged some minutes later that the girl Minna should be sent to Dr. Zeppichmann with a message. She was to say politely that Herr and Frau Spühler presented their compliments, and would be much obliged if Dr. Zeppichmann could refrain from his carpentering in the evenings, since it troubled some of the other guests.

So once again Josef was disturbed.

He was using the time between two readings to finish putting up a tube-rack, when he felt a draught at his back and found the girl standing behind him, her weight on one leg, hands crossed on her dirty wet apron, foolish eyes pointed stubbornly at the wall.

"Well, what in hell is it now?"

She started coughing. This creature always coughed explosively when you asked her a question, stopped to grin at you in a silly, confiding way and then went on until you could have thrashed her.

"Please," she got out at last, "Frau Spühler sends her kind regards and you're to stop making that filthy row, it's driving Herr Meisel cracked."

Apparently he did not hear her. He was regarding her face as if she had spoken in a foreign language. He said:

"Here, come over here a minute! I want to look at you. How long have you had that cough?"

DR. DITTMER'S regard for his animals was akin to that of the prize cattle-breeder. The use of animals is to get him money, he is quite callous about that; and yet, as he tends them each day to increase their cash-value, his possessive feeling becomes a kind of affection. A complex sadism, some would say. Inaccurately, but let it pass.

He kept a big cage of rats, beauties, in reserve for future use. And as long as they were not required for experiments they had every luxury he could contrive for them. On Sundays he made a special journey to feed them, not trusting the lab-boy. Sentimentalist or brute as you please, he was naturally upset when, one morning, he found three of them dead.

His analysis of the contents of the stomachs showed no trace of any toxin. Two of the carcasses had what looked like minute punctures in the neck, where a very little tuft of fur might have been cut away; but both these specimens had been notorious fighters, and in any case the indication was too small to build on.

He did make some inquiries; and learnt from Proske, the lab-boy, that Dr. Zeppichmann had been arriving very early several mornings lately. At what time? Oh, about half-past five, when the cleaners came. Proske himself checked in at six o'clock, and three times in the last week he had found Dr. Zeppichmann already at work. At work, whereabouts? Over there preparing nutrient media—or so Proske thought. "Nowhere near the rats?" "Not that I remember, Doctor."

Later on he tackled Josef himself.

"Well, Zeppichmann, you seem to find my poor little department beneficial to your health. I hear you are bounding in here when the cock crows."

Josef smiled.

"Yes, Doctor, yes, I like to get a little laboratory work done before my daily duties begin. You'll see, I've done three more tubes of your delta-four, I thought they might be useful."

"Ah yes, yes, that's possible. Thank you. I was going to ask you—have you noticed any of my rats looking at all out-of-sorts lately? Bismarck IV—you know, the big dark fellow—you haven't noticed anything peculiar about him?"

Josef hesitated.

"Well, I did wonder whether he was moulting a bit when I saw him the other day—I was over there using Herr Korbenhaus's balance. But of course I didn't think anything of it—I know the animals there are under your own supervision."

"You've never given them anything to eat? A bit of sugar or something?"

"To eat? No, Doctor Dittmer, no—I shouldn't think of doing such a thing."

No one could have doubted the honesty of Josef's eyes. No one, except Dittmer. Not that he disliked the boy: it was impossible wholly to dislike a youth of such keenness, one who was never out of temper, always ready to do an odd job of the humblest kind, always sharp in comprehension. But he did not trust him. The boy's curiosity was more than academic—he could not see a paper on the floor without turning it over, in a roundabout way he was always finding out exactly what Dittmer was doing. Dittmer, moreover, was not used to being treated with 'so much deference. He liked to think of his department as a small republic, he liked his young men to argue with him, didn't mind a little unqualified rudeness; for that assured him that he was a

human-being, not yet a mere muscle of the hospital like poor dear Röstel. This Zeppichmann, he was too punctilious, he had altogether too much virtue. Dittmer suspected, moreover, that he had secret designs to bring a Röstellian tidiness into the department; once or twice he had found a book he wanted most conveniently near his elbow, and Zeppichmann had been in the room not long before.

That, of course, was not quite the same thing as poisoning rats. But a tidy man could not be watched too closely.

Sitting opposite Röstel, as usual, at the midday meal, he said:

"I suppose you give that Zeppichmann of yours a dog's life. He's always taking refuge in my humble department."

Röstel sniffed.

"A dog's life? I suppose you think because you are allowed to take six months, if you feel like it, to prepare an overdose of toxins and administer it to one guinea-pig, we, we others, in the working part of the hospital, can also arrange the lives of our patients to suit our own convenience. I suppose you suppose that we have infinite leisure in which—"

"Stop, my dear friend, stop!" Dittmer pleaded. "Another sentence as long as that, with your mouth full of mashed potato, and you'll turn into a patient yourself. What I really wondered was whether you are finding Zeppichmann enough work to do. He seems to have a lot of time and energy left over. Perhaps you're rather slack in the wards at present?"

"Slack?" A shrapnel burst of potato shot over the table. "I tell you, Karl, if one of you people from the slop-shop over there had to tackle the work I do in a single morning, day after day—"

"Yes yes! I was only suggesting that you might hand over a bit more of it to your assistant. Seeing that he's a tidy

man, not likely to put back a set of kidneys in the wrong patient—”

“Do you mean,” Röstel asked bluntly, “that you’re finding him a nuisance? Because if so you must complain to Doctor Wildelau. It’s nothing to do with me, I didn’t engage him, I can’t arrange what he does in his spare time.”

Dittmer dug at a caved tooth, pondering. No, it wouldn’t be fair to call Zeppichmann a nuisance.

“I lost three of my rats this morning,” he said inconsequently.

“God in Heaven! If I find them in one of my wards—”

“No, I mean they’ve died.”

“Well, that’s what they’re meant for, isn’t it?”

“Yes, like your patients, my dear Röstel, that’s what they’re meant for. But it’s better, in both cases, that death should take place at the proper time.”

“Are you trying to make out that my assistant has poisoned your rats? If so, you must refer the matter to Doctor Wildelau, it’s nothing to do with me, I’m not responsible. God bless my soul, I’ve got enough to do, six wards to look after, not including the casualty room, these young nurses they get nowadays never knowing where anything is, man died of haemorrhage the night before last, silly girl on night duty got the form filled up all wrong, without chasing my young man all over the place to see he doesn’t interfere with your menagerie. You’d better keep them locked up, it seems to me . . .”

Nevertheless, he had his eye on Josef that afternoon.

The boy was kept busy enough, in all conscience. Röstel never saw him idle, and wherever he went there were signs of his activity. In Ward 9 he found one of the beds in a new position. “Here, nurse, sister, Fräulein Laupert, what’s this bed doing over here?” “It’s Doctor Zeppichmann’s orders, Herr Doktor. He thought there was too much sun over there, it might be bad for Frau Meyer’s skin-trouble.” Here

there was an extra bolster, brought at Dr. Zeppichmann's instructions, here a man was wearing tinted glasses, as Dr. Zeppichmann had required, here a probationer called in from another ward was preparing half-hourly compresses for an incipient ulcer. Röstel himself had thought the ulcer too trivial to be worth attention—the man's real trouble was a groin-wound—but Zeppichmann had decided otherwise. Well, it did no harm, that attention to detail. Everything that Zeppichmann ordered was sensible. He bothered the patients, he sometimes brought the nursing staff to the verge of mutiny, but in theory it was all sound doctoring . . . In the next ward he found Zeppichmann himself, washing an impetigo case. A middle-grade nurse stood by, one of those tall girls who achieved a Charlottenburg distinction even in uniform, holding the basin and cutting Josef into shreds with her angry eyes.

"Couldn't you leave that to Fräulein Henschel?" Röstel asked mildly.

Josef shook his head.

"I was not quite satisfied. I mean, I wanted to be sure that the skin was properly sterilised all round the points of eruption."

"Herr Bercovitz told me he was perfectly comfortable after I did it," the nurse said, her voice like Juno through a drain-pipe.

"Yes, but—I was not thinking of the patient's comfort," Josef said bleakly.

"Well," said Röstel, "I think perhaps you might leave that now, Fräulein Henschel will finish it off, and come to the theatre. I've got an examination to make."

"Certainly, Doctor Röstel. I'll be there in four minutes. I can quite well leave the other jobs and do them this evening."

That was just it, Röstel thought: young Zeppichmann never did think of the patients' comfort, except where com-

fort had a physiological importance. And Healing, after all, was not an industry . . . And yet, the boy had good hands, he could do a dressing more expertly than most of the nurses . . .

'Ah, if I could only catch him doing something really stupid!' Röstel thought; and afterwards blamed himself severely for such lack of charity.

Up on the fourth floor Sister Dahms was having five minutes' rest and coffee with her friend Sister Täubler.

"Of course the young man is quite inhuman," Sister Täubler said. "He's interested in nothing but himself."

"I don't think you're quite right, dear! If he was interested in himself, surely he'd get a decent pair of shoes instead of those ploughboy things, and surely he'd try to do something about his hair—did you ever see a head more like an old clothes-brush? No, he seems to me to think of nothing but medicine-glasses. Always hunting for empty medicine-glasses, so that he can call the duty-nurse and try to make her feel like a murderess. I really believe it's the only thing that makes him happy—finding an unwashed medicine-glass. I think there must be some dark story behind it—I think Doctor Röstel must have made a misalliance with a machine hand in a bottle-factory."

"Or perhaps Doctor Zeppichmann's mother trod on a medicine-glass during the period of gestation."

"Or more likely she trod on little Zeppichmann's head *after* the period of gestation."

"You mean you think he's really not quite compos?"

"My dear, he couldn't be!"

"At any rate the patients hate him."

"Oh *don't* they!"

In truth, Josef Zeppichmann was thinking not of medicine-glasses but of Dittmer's rats. Standing beside Röstel, taking over specimens of blood and urine, sealing and label-

ling them, asking questions, he was concentrating all the time on the problem of Dittmer's rats.

Those three rats ought not to have died.

His object had been to see how far the percentage of his Theta agent, which he had proved to be favourable to tissue instauration, could be increased. In his final experiments at Zornenwalde he had got the figure up to 2.65, and he had hoped to advance it as far as 3.50, which would allow the Kappa to be reduced proportionately. The actual proportions he had used with Dittmer's rats were 3.00, 3.25, 3.75; half-fearing that the last might be lethal. But that 3.00 had proved lethal was a bitter disappointment. It meant, on a rough mental calculation, that his safety index would be reduced to 22 degrees. And old Sinsteden at Zornenwalde, lecturing on Elements of Bacteriology, had laid it down that to proceed from animals to the human subject was not ethically justifiable with an index lower than 30.

In short, he was not yet ready to experiment on the human subject.

He would have to find a new Theta agent, or else in some way modify the Kappa. Probably he would have to try both. With luck, he might stumble on a satisfactory Theta in two or three hundred experiments—say three months' work. Much more likely it would be six months. Six months—and somewhere else a man working on a similar hypothesis, with all the proper equipment, might announce a formula to-morrow.

("Yes, Doctor Röstel, I sterilised it myself this morning. And that one too.")

And after all, what real grounds had old Sinsteden for his calculus of safety? On what principle could he maintain that it was right to experiment on the human subject with an index of 30, wrong with 29? Surely every scientist must make his own judgement on the basis of life values.

There was an anecdote his father was fond of telling in

his war reminiscences, about an old ruin of a place called Les Deux Ecureuils, which they had disputed with a French battalion right through the autumn of '16. Possession of this place had become a point of honour. And one night when the French had kept it for a month or so, the divisional commandant had sent out a party to get it back. "A birthday present for the General," he had said. A hundred and fifty men were involved in that spree. Twenty-eight had got back. Just twenty-eight. One hundred and twenty-two lives—gone—to settle a little matter of prestige. Well, he, Josef, was not asking for a hundred and twenty-two lives. He was asking for just one. One fairly hopeless life that he might restore or might possibly destroy.

Not even a whole life: half a life, one might say.

He had visited frequently the sanatorium near Zornenwalde and studied the patients there. They existed, they breathed: many of them asleep for long periods in the day, awake and in pain through much of the night: people who could not read right through a magazine article because they no longer had the mental stamina to concentrate on print for half an hour. Pointless lives, because all the hope had gone out of them.

Those tuberculous guinea-pigs, the last batch he had used at Zornenwalde, had looked so much like that; lying all day in the little cages, staring at him with apathetic eyes. The test group had got much worse after the sixth injection, they had refused even to drink water, become unconscious. That had been a wretched night, when he was expecting them to die. But only one had died. That moment, twelve hours later, when one had started to push its nose against the wire, asking for food, had brought a curious, intense excitement. And six weeks later, watching the surviving nine as they tumbled and gobbled, climbed up the wire to snatch at the greenery he held for them, he had felt his first great happiness. The triumph had seemed to be complete. That

day he was certain that he, a young medical student whom nobody had ever heard of, had defeated one of the oldest enemies.

But triumph cannot be enjoyed in privacy. Between the moment of great discovery and the day of recognition you are whipped by a scarcely tolerable impatience. Nine guinea-pigs, running and gobbling in full enjoyment of their animal life: that was nothing to tell the world about. To take a man—or a woman—whose case looked hopeless and restore him to full health . . . publish a meticulously detailed account of the case in *Neue Medizinische Monatsschrift*, with an outline of the working basis, synopsis of previous experiments . . . Send marked copies to one or two specialists in Vienna, to the Berlin newspapers . . . That would start the headlines. There, still ahead but almost within grasp, there was Josef's day!

But it was rather worrying about Dittmer's rats. No reason, on the face of it, why in this respect the rat and guinea-pig reactions should differ.

"Yes, Doctor Röstel, if you care to leave it to me I'll clear up everything here and enter the report. Yes, I'll bring the book to the surgery for you to check over. Yes, Doctor Röstel . . ."

There was a mastoid in Ward 9 to look at, a lost case that one had to be careful about, with the quadruplicate report in mind: one or two other things. He was free at half-past seven and decided to work for an hour in Dittmer's laboratory, giving supper a miss. At times like these, when his mind was driving hard, he could go a long time without food.

Dittmer was not there. Only Korbenhaus, the chief assistant, sprawled over his bench, grunting and belching like a cowherd. It might be worth while, Josef thought, to try bringing Kappa to a higher temperature before passing it into solution with the saline compound; this might offset the

violence of the subsequent reaction, leaving Theta in a purer form, without reducing the compensating value. Or possibly, by using Fischer's compound instead of the Löchert stuff, he could afford to introduce a stronger alkaline agent. The formula would be in one of Dittmer's manuals, the materials were at hand. Two hours' work, then he could leave the solution to settle and get Dittmer's microscope on it to-morrow morning before he came. In the meantime he could be preparing in his own room (his own laboratory, as he mentally called it) a sufficient quantity of Psi Plus emulsion to provide for the further experiments. And he would still get nearly three hours' sleep.

"Do you mind lending me that set of retorts?"

"Certainly, certainly, my dear Zeppichmann! They are the ones I was just about to use, but it makes no difference. No doubt you are starting some epoch-making experiments?"

"No no, Herr Korbenhaus, I am only fiddling a little to amuse myself."

At nine o'clock Dittmer came back, pitched off his coat and went to examine his new cultures, singing *Kemst Du das Land?* in his chesty bass. "I've been to see our good Director," he suddenly announced, negligently twiddling the micro-adjustment. "Satan's sins, how that man does fuss! Heidkamp's bill, that's the trouble this time. That busybody Zinkler must needs go and show it him, and he wanted to know what the hospital had got for the money. Two hundred miserable Marks!"

"What was it?" Korbenhaus shouted across the room, "rat food?"

"Don't talk to me about rats—rats are off the menu to-day! What was the bill for? How should I know—I'm not an accounting clerk! D'you know what I did? I showed Wildelau a tube of water coloured with a pinch of potassium permanganate, and I told him it was a specimen of the rarest fluid in Europe."

"But there's nothing rare about potassium permanganate solution," Korbenhaus objected. "I could make gallons of it myself."

"That," said Dittmer, "is because of the specialised training you have had under my care."

He climbed up to kneel on the bench—he liked to be well over his work—and started singing again. He was a very happy man, who easily expelled the small cares that came his way with noisy explosions of temper; and these were his best moments. The smudge he was watching had been a uniform cloudy blue this morning. Now it had a hard rim of dirty orange. That rim meant, to him, a military tribal movement which made the Tartar migrations seem trivial. A minute drop delicately released from his pipette, and the instinct in a billion particles had worked to his will, forming a new empire. Instinct? He doubted that. Those specks of protoplasm which he had never seen were equipped, he thought, with something equivalent to reason: else how, when he attacked them, did they always find the single chance of escape? And now, as he worked the muscles of his eyes, trying to detect some fainter streak of colour within the orange, his thoughts swept down into the kingdom he watched. To be one of those, to be among that billion of individuals? Yes, individuals, he believed that, he had lived with them so long. Would he, down there in that multitude, conceive a purpose different from mere survival? Was there, down there, ambition, leadership? He could believe that as well . . .

"Excuse me, Doctor Dittmer. I wonder if you will be so kind as to lend me your Pelzer? It's just a little point I want to clear up."

"Who the devil are you?" he shouted. "Oh, it's you! Yes yes damn it, help yourself to Pelzer, only don't believe a word he says. A typical chemist, a fundamental bungler. What are you up to?"

Josef hesitated.

"Well, really, I was only making up something to keep the moths out of my clothes. It's a great nuisance, they eat up everything I possess."

"Well they've got to eat something, haven't they! Moths, my dear Zeppichmann, are sent by a wise providence to curtail the vanity of young doctors. Good God, what a caboodle you're rigging over there!"

He slid to the floor and drifted across to the corner bench, cursing the lengths of tube and glass stoppers as he trod on them.

"All this infernal machinery," he said sadly, "for the single purpose of destroying the humble moth! Explain it to me, good Zeppichmann, I am a child in these matters. Your moth, I suppose, slides up the tube here, he takes a sip from this flask, he passes on through this rubber connection towards the pleasant warmth of the bunsen burner. Is that it?"

Josef constructed his smile.

"It always interests me," he said, "trying to work out new arrangements of apparatus."

Very young! Dittmer thought. Really, when rats arrived at maturity in a few weeks, it seemed absurd that human beings grew up so slowly, and in the end had rather less intelligence. And yet, this youngster whose big hands worked so deftly, who grasped so quickly any point in the mathematics of research . . .

"By the way," he said, "I'd prefer you not to use this place before I come in the mornings. Or any time when I'm not here. It's just that Doctor Wildelau might think materials were being wasted, he expects me to keep my eye on everything . . ."

HE THOUGHT it advisable to see Frau Spühler about it first of all.

Once a week she made a formal call in his room, bringing the bill: she liked to do this in person, feeling that by a tactful charm she could make the commercial transaction into one of social pleasantness.

"Good-evening, Herr Doktor! Well, the time has come again for us to exchange our little weekly tokens of honesty and friendship!" Then her dainty laugh. Then, "The little bits of paper that make the wheels go round!"

As a rule he had the money ready. He would give her his distant smile, with "It is a pleasure, gnädige Frau!" and the business was over. But this time, with a touch of ceremony, he asked her to be seated.

"If you are not too busy, Frau Spühler, and can spare me a few minutes, there is a little matter I should like to discuss with you."

Frau Spühler had no wish to sit down. Tired as she always was, she much preferred to stand when in the guests' rooms, feeling vaguely that she must keep an easy escape. But now her mind had set off on such a wild career that her body, uncontrolled, dropped into the chair he set for her. 'A little matter.' That terrible phrase could only mean one thing: Dr. Zeppichmann was angry that she had stopped his evening carpentry, the Professor had said something that evening which impugned the Doctor's honour, Minna had given the message insultingly, the Doctor was going to demand an apology, he was going to insist on Herr Meisel being asked to leave the house, he was going to leave himself,

he would refuse to pay this week's bill, there would be a lawyer's letter and dear August would say it was all her fault.

"It's just a suggestion I wanted to make," Josef began. "Of course I don't want to interfere with what's no business of mine—"

"But you don't understand," she said. "It's just that Herr Meisel had a headache that evening, otherwise I'm sure he would not have made any objection to your construction-work."

"Herr Meisel?—a headache—?"

"You see, really Herr Meisel has a very nice nature, he comes of a distinguished family, one of the oldest families in Berlin. Herr Meisel is going through a very difficult time, even the finest brains are left idle nowadays, the government does nothing. And he is so young. I wish you could have heard the charming things he has said to me sometimes—when he is quite well, I mean—such a sweet thing he said once when he was in bed and I took him up some soup. When you think of his living all this long way from his mother, and naturally he had grown fond of this room, the outlook is so nice."

"Indeed, yes!" Josef agreed. "I am only sorry that there aren't two rooms with the same outlook. It was about your servant-girl that I wanted to speak to you."

Ah! With that direction Frau Spühler could run before the wind. How often had Frau Rupf said 'That girl of yours!—' and how many times had she swamped the wrath of Frau Rupf with her own!

"Minna?" she said. "I tell you, Herr Doktor, I can do nothing with the girl. You can't imagine how it vexes me, her slovenly behaviour, her carelessness over the visitors' rooms. But you see how it is, the child has no mother, when I first took her she couldn't even sew properly, and in these days there's no one to teach a motherless child the proper

way of addressing educated people. Herr Spühler, you see, suffers from his heart a great deal, so when I am doing the cooking I can't keep the same eye on Minna as if she was working with somebody who could show her what she does wrong. I'm sure she does try, in her own way. You see, with the price of greenfood going up twice in one week—"

"I've noticed that she has a little cough," Josef said.

"Her cough, yes! Of course it's not easy to teach these things to a child who's had no proper schooling, but in time I shall get her to put her hand up. I constantly tell her—"

"I was wondering," Josef persisted, "if I could do something for it."

Frau Spühler nodded.

"Why yes, Herr Doktor, if you were to tell her about putting her hand up I'm sure—"

"No, I mean, I was wondering if I could do something to make the cough better."

"Better?"

It was confusing to talk to a young man like this, who seemed to be always running away from you. For an instant, with her thoughts tripped in headlong flight, she had a vision of Minna, under Herr Zeppichmann's tuition, diligently practising a more tuneful cough. But almost at once her mind regained its balance and she saw the danger. That last girl she had had, the voluminous Elsa, Elsa had complained so much about her legs aching that she had sent her to a doctor; and the doctor, naturally, since he had to earn his living like every one else, had announced that Elsa had varicose veins. That had meant a fortnight in bed, and afterwards two trips every week to the Moltke Hospital.

"It's habit," she said, "just a bad habit. She had a little cold and that started her coughing and now she can't make up her mind to leave off. It's very kind of you, Herr Doktor, all the same."

"I'd like just to examine her," Josef said woodenly.

"Oh, but if it goes on I can get Doctor Wohlfahrt to see her. Doctor Wohlfahrt attends to all the working people, he has special rates."

"But it would be a pleasure to me to give my professional service without charge. It would—it would allow me to show some appreciation of what has been done for me in this house. You have been most kind—in arranging about this room, and sometimes giving me supper at special hours."

Frau Spühler found that tears were coming up into her throat. Such a long and difficult conversation always weakened her, the moment came when her tired brain seemed to slip out of gear and powerful emotion swept up into the space her thoughts had left. That this difficult young man, with all the doctors' books he had read, and operations and things too—that he should be so kind! Even when Herr Meisel, who had really a sweet nature—and naturally a young man of aristocratic birth was highly-strung—had said unkind things to him in her house! To have all these young men in her care, with their mothers so far away, and then to have them saying such kind things to her! But she did not cry. August hated to see her crying—it was naturally upsetting to a naval man—and she had discovered that if she spoke very fast indeed, holding her throat very stiff, the sobs could not overtake her words.

"You don't know how hard it is!" she said. "Dear Herr Doktor, I try so hard to make everything right, I put a new chair in Herr Meisel's room, I thought that would make up to him for the view out of the window. I only want us all to be happy. If Minna would only take the syrup I made for her, it's an old recipe of my mother's, but I knew from the mess in the sink she had just poured it away. I do try to get round to all the rooms myself, I want all my guests to feel that they are just one family."

He was looking at her with a patient kindness, but he

did not seem to understand. Something else was needed to make him understand her.

"Herr Barthol will be sixty-eight on Sunday," she said desperately, "in spite of all the trouble he has with his kidneys."

"Well, perhaps I ought to be getting on with some work," Josef said. "It is most kind of you to have given me so much of your time."

When she had gone he smoked a cigarette; a treat he generally kept for Saturdays. He would have to try again later on, and if the good fool could not be brought to the point he would act without her. Actually another week's delay was, in strict theory, essential. Sinsteden's dictum about safety was still lodged in his mind. Another week might give him the clue for an improvement in Theta. Possibly Frau Spühler would let him keep a cage of rats in the bicycle shed, if he explained that they were very tame and really quite lovable . . .

It was worrying about those rats of Dittmer's. All three of them, dead within twenty-four hours of the injection. If a human subject went off like that . . . But it was a case of one life against thousands. Somewhere, in a newspaper, he had come across a phrase used by a political speaker. 'It is the many we have to think of. The individual does not matter.' Yes, that was it.

The individual does not matter.

EVENTS danced to the tune of his impatience.

At supper on Tuesday Frau Spühler brought in the dishes herself. When it came to changing the courses everybody helped, Herr Spühler carrying the tray, Herr Barthol getting out of his chair to put a plate on the sideboard, even Herr Meisel taking a dish or two along to the kitchen. From a certain delicacy, no one asked why Minna was away from duty until Josef himself put the question.

"The girl is lying down," Frau Spühler answered. "She says she has a headache."

It was generally felt that Dr. Zeppichmann had been wanting in decent manners; like one who, with a dead body in the house, carelessly asks why a chair is empty.

But later in the evening he had a visit from the Spühlers together. They stood in the middle of his room, side by side.

Herr Spühler said: "You must understand that we don't want to impose on you. It must be arranged on a proper financial basis. I shall meet the charge myself, and the girl will repay as much as she can out of her wages."

Frau Spühler said: "Of course you will realize that it's nothing serious. She has often had these headaches before, it's only that I feel it my duty to do everything possible, supposing there might be something wrong with Minna."

"Doctor Wohlfahrt was out when I went for him," Herr Spühler added. "His usual charge for working people is three-Marks-fifty. Of course he is a man of very great experience, with six letters after his name."

"Possibly something in the way of a tonic," Frau Spühler suggested. "The cause is low spirits, it comes from

the blood. You see how difficult it is for me, with the house-work on top of the cooking. It made me so ashamed, seeing poor Herr Barthol having to take his own plate away as if he was in a common lodging-house."

"And naturally we want to do what is right," Herr Spühler continued. "She is not really a bad girl, and in any case we feel a duty towards her. We take an interest in her health, just as the captain of a warship is concerned with the health of his most junior gunner."

Like an expert bidder at an auction, Josef waited for them to run dry; without impatience, for he wanted time to prepare his answer. The mention of Dr. Wohlfahrt found a spring in his nature. So, there was competition! This fuddle-witted Spühler would play off another doctor against him! Well, if they wanted to haggle he would lay down his own terms.

When a pause came he was all ready.

"I don't want to alarm you," he said, "but you must realise that the girl's trouble may be more serious than you think. I don't care for that cough."

"Oh, but she's had that for a long time—"

"Exactly! Perhaps too long! You may not know, but certain kinds of cough are infectious—"

Frau Spühler was appalled.

"But, Doctor Zeppichmann, if it's infectious she must go to the hospital at once! With all these people in the house, Herr Barthol sixty-eight last Sunday—"

"—The only thing is, if we take her to the hospital, and they find the trouble to be serious, we may be blamed for not giving the case more attention in its earlier stages. Of course I myself have had nothing to go on—"

"But Minna never asked to see a doctor!" Frau Spühler protested. "If she'd told me—"

Her husband cut across her. He had done some private manoeuvring in his navy days, he grasped Josef's point.

"You mean, you would like to treat her yourself?" he asked bluntly.

"It must be just as you like, Herr Spühler. Doctor Wohlfahrt's experience must be far greater than mine—though possibly my medical knowledge is rather more up-to-date."

"Doctor Wohlfahrt," Spühler said slowly, "makes special terms to poor people. Minna's treatment will be partly at our own expense, but—"

Josef smiled. The table was ready for his card.

"I have already told Frau Spühler that I should be glad to take the case without a fee. Minna has done many small services for me, she has—she has always cleaned my boots very nicely. And of course"—a special smile for Frau Spühler—"I have come to feel myself a member of your household. I make only one condition, which I'm sure you will find quite reasonable. The case must be left entirely in my hands—that is, unless I myself think it desirable to invite another opinion."

Spühler hesitated. Suppose the girl was to die or something? A young chap like this . . . But his wife's mind was driving on again, working her tongue as a steamboat's wash draws little waves along the river bank.

"But you know, Herr Doktor, you ought not to take in all she says. Minna is rather a lazy girl, sometimes when she says she's not up to her work—"

"You can leave that to the doctor!" Spühler said.

"I promise you," Josef added, "that I shan't keep her in bed any more than is absolutely essential."

Frau Spühler opened her mouth, but nothing more came. It hurt her deepest feelings to settle a question all in a moment like this. A dozen new aspects rose to the surface—her position in relation to a paying guest, her responsibility towards a hired girl, the question whether this young man would know about certain things that young women had

to go through (which of course could not be discussed with dear August present), the problem of who was to take up the coffee to Frau Rupf in the mornings . . . The crowd of uncertainties, storming to escape in speech, jammed all together at the exit.

"I—I don't know," she said. "I don't—I really don't know . . . Very well, I'll go and get her room tidy."

"There's no need to do that," Josef said with decision. He reached back for an exercise book which lay on his table and slipped it into his pocket. "I know where her room is," he said.

He was calmly slipping past her, out of the room. He was going upstairs.

"Herr Doktor!" she called.

She heard his heavy boots going on up the attic staircase; his voice, quite like a real doctor's voice, saying "May I come in!"; the squeak and then the bang of the attic door.

IT WAS rather as if Minna had only just arrived in this room, for a short visit. Her small travelling-box stood open in the middle of the floor, her belongings tumbling over the sides, everything else was on the bed or the floor, clothes, cigarette ends, cracked ink-bottle, a crumpled copy of *Der Westöstliche Divan*. Her cap lay in the pool of grey water which a dip in the boards had collected from a little roof-hole; and amusingly, a giant spider who had found this island refuge stood fast at Josef's entrance, seeming to glare at him resentfully. Only the tight, damp-woollen odour of the room suggested her four years' occupation.

It reminded Josef of his own room at Richterhausen. That, of course, had always been beautifully clean; even in a woodshed his mother would not have allowed this jungle of webs, the green mould on this flaking plaster, the basin rimmed with brown soapstains; but the shape was similar—a minute window where the wall was shallowest, the way the rickety door, half-opened, came against the side of the bed. This kind of disorder he also knew, from the recent days at Zornenwalde, where students were sent out to the factory district to try their hands at a confinement. A smell like this no longer disturbed him, the woodlice crawling along the bedrail were what he expected in quarters of this kind. But he found it all distasteful. The shape of poverty, to one a fraction past its margin, was in a peculiar way offensive.

He shoved his way along the wall to the head of the bed, where the roof's slope let him stand upright.

Minna, sleeping, took her place in the room's carelessness: the cotton slip flung down at one end of the bed, the

girl at the other; with one arm hanging down to the floor. The thick dark hair sprawled across her face like a wild horse's mane, the small face was white and damp. She breathed quite steadily, not coughing at all. Only a small movement of the muscles in her eyes and cheeks showed that some pain had followed her into sleep.

He had not been able to study her so closely before; and now he felt the same sharp excitement that buying his own stethoscope had given him. All those hours of work, the lost sleep, the tedium of meticulous checking: and this was the climax, perhaps the gateway into triumph. For an instant as he watched the face the lips, dividing in a curious smile, sent his thoughts in a new direction: the chance of danger . . . But his resolution shut that door at once. She had, after all, so little to lose. *'The individual does not matter.'*

"Minna!" he whispered.

As soon as her eyes opened, the cough, like an engine started with the throttle wide, began to shake her with continuous violence. The attack went on for half a minute. Josef had been ready for this. He slipped his arm round her shoulders, pulled her up and a little forward, seized a tooth-mug standing on the floor and held it for the sputum. When it was over he straightened the bolster and put her back against it, carefully, as one lowering a crate of china. He said: "There, that's over now, that's better, just keep quiet a minute!"

The voice was an echo of Dr. Plünnecke's, far more smoothly rounded than the one Josef used in the hospital; he was surprised to find how easily it came, the Plünnecke patient-voice. And like a magic cloak, cut down to fit, the whole of Plünnecke's clinical technique seemed to fall about him: the careful movement of the hands, eyes confident and thoughtful, even the changeless sympathy of Plünnecke's smile.

"You told me, didn't you, that the cough started about a year ago, as far as you remember?"

The girl looked at him stupidly.

"Did *she* tell you to come up here?"

"Yes," he said, "yes, Frau Spühler thought I might be able to make you a bit more comfortable. It makes you feel tired, that cough, doesn't it?"

"I'll come down when I'm better," she answered hoarsely. "I've got to feel bad sometimes, haven't I! I'm not trying to get her money for nothing. I felt bad all last week but didn't say anything. I can't make Herr Meisel's boots shine when they're wet, whatever I feel like."

Josef said: "You're not going to do any more work, Minna, until I give my permission."

"I'm going to do as I like," she said, and turned to face the other way.

Blessings on old Plünnecke, shabby, short-sighted, terrified of boys: old Plünnecke with his loose-knitted tie flopping out of his waistcoat, lecture-notes drifting all over the classroom in the boisterous draught—he had told them chapter-and-verse how you dealt with a patient like this!

Josef moved a pair of shoes, sat on the end of the bed, and pulled out the exercise book: brand new, a week ago, for only forty pfennigs. They had offered him one with a stiffer cover for fifty, but he had decided that he could strengthen the cover of the cheaper one with cardboard. The first page was already headed, 'First Test with Human Subject: Minna Wersen,' with a list of spaces marked for primary data.

"Do you know," he said, "I used to have a room just like this. At home, I mean. I lived in a place called Zornenwalde, my father had a little hardware shop there. Yes, I never slept anywhere except that little room till I was seventeen—I'm twenty-four now. How old are you?"

"I don't know," she said.

He wrote against 'Age': 'Estimated nineteen.'

"What part of the country do *you* come from?"

"I don't know."

But he was neither disturbed nor vexed. 'All patients are evasive,' Plünnecke had said, 'except the kind that are garrulous and misleading. Many behave like guilty prisoners under cross-examination.' Yes, Josef was prepared for this; and in time he would get what he wanted out of the little wretch. He went on talking, slowly, silkily: about his home life, the hard conditions when his father was away at the war, a bad illness he had had in the cold winter of '22, when food was so scarce. His eyes were searching the room, imagining an enlargement of the window, a little home-made table slipped in beside the bed for tools and medicine. They fell on another exercise book which protruded from under the bolster, grubby and dogeared but the twin of his own. So Minna also kept a notebook! What in the world would she write in it?

"I suppose you don't remember the war? You're too young for that."

"I remember the French soldiers," she said. "One of them came into our place. I went and bit his leg."

"So you lived in the Rhine country?"

"That was ever so long ago. I don't remember anything about it, except biting the French soldier."

"Oh, your parents moved later on?"

"Not unless some one dug them up."

"I see." He was looking round for a towel, anything he could use to cool her face. "Well, I hope you gave up biting people later on."

"I bit a girl at school."

"Good heavens! Why?"

"She said that Fräulein Rother was a pious humbug. That wasn't true. Fräulein Rother was kind to me, she was the only decent one among all the bitches."

"You didn't like school?"

"No, I only liked Fräulein Rother. When she died I bunked."

"It was a boarding-school, was it? I never went to one."

"You're lucky. They're hell."

"As bad as being here? I mean, working for Frau Spühler?"

"One bitch is better than half a dozen. I don't mean Fräulein Rother. She was a Bride of God."

Surprised, Josef asked:

"What sort of school was it? A religious school?"

"I don't know. Yes, they had religion, they had a Pastor to do that. It was a thingummy school—a dump. They had all of the bad lots, stealers, dirty-minds, balmies, kids with no parents."

"Which bunch did you come in?"

"No parents, of course. 'Unfortunates,' that's what they called our lot. That meant orphans and bastards."

She had turned to face him again, speaking with a small animation that changed her curiously. With a little blood in her cheeks, hair pushed back and eyes coming to life, she might have been a normal subject under a bout of common fever. So much that for a moment he was scared, thinking that his longing had forced his imagination. It might be some ordinary bronchial affection, severe, but of no interest whatever.

"That cough's a nuisance, isn't it!" he said. "I know—I had one just like it, went on for months. I could give you something for it if you like."

Even as he spoke the animation faded out. He waited for another salvo of coughing, but it didn't come. There was just a silent struggle, all the motions of a man tied to a stake. She whispered:

"It gets—it gets my breath—sometimes!"

"Let's look at your chest, can I?" he said.

He could not hear her answer. Her head had fallen right back, her eyes were shut as if she slept again. But from the tension of her body he knew she was conscious, and he saw her lips moving. Well, he had been very patient, he couldn't wait any longer. Carefully, as when he worked in the theatre, he moved the draggled blanket. And knew immediately, with a giant relief, that he had not been wrong.

When he saw the body itself he wanted to shout. The condition, for his purpose, was almost as good as it could be; perhaps dangerously good: the flesh so thin that it showed the pectoral structure like a window, the left mamma shrunken to an empty pocket, the left chest-wall collapsed upon the upper lobe. He had seen a similar formation twenty times in middle-life cases; never so perfect an example in adolescence. Move this girl up to the hospital, put her under Vollmuth's standard treatment, and her chances of getting back to normal life were perhaps one in ten. Say, to be fair, one in five. And under his, the Zeppichmann treatment? Well, six months would settle it. Yes, from carefully weighted calculation he was confident that in only six months she would be safe; or, of course, dead. The excitement was so urgent that he could not resist it. He felt for his pencil, which had dropped into a fold of the bedclothes, and began to write.

'When case first examined, disease already well advanced . . . deepening of supraclavicular fossae . . . flattening of the mammae . . . râles everywhere . . . whispered pectoriloquy . . . cavitation at the left apex . . . superficial examination indicated left lung too far affected to respond to any treatment . . .'

A hoarse whisper:

"Can't you—do anything—better than that!"

The smile he had let drop came back again.

"I'm such a stupid fellow," he said, "I always have to write things down, otherwise I forget everything."

"What d'you want to remember?"

"The way your chest goes when you cough. Wait a minute, I'll get you something."

He covered her and slipped away. To his relief the stairs and passage were empty—he had expected that Frau Spühler would be listening at the door and he would have to cut his way through a jungle of questions. Confidence, he thought, must get the girl's confidence—stupid to have made that note, childish—first injection to-morrow?—no, too soon.

Back in his own room, he used all the quickness which hospital work had given him. Medicine—ignorant people always liked to have medicine—something harmless, with an emollient: there was some stuff he used himself—yes, here in the drawer—this with a fourth part of Frerk's solution would quieten the cough a little; and ten minims of laudanum wouldn't hurt. Ten? Make it fifteen. He sped about the room, putting a saucepan on the stove, collecting instruments, lysol, basin, cottonwool, clean towels, his own bedclothes. Within ten minutes he was at the attic door again, arms weighed with paraphernalia.

He found her sitting up, staring with a child's ignorant expectancy. (Like Dittmer's rats, he thought.) She said:

"Oh, you've come back!"

"Yes. And I've got you some medicine. Quick, wasn't it? I made it myself. Quite nice, you try!"

"I'd rather have something from the chemist's. They know how to make it right."

"I used to be a chemist," he told her.

(Near enough.)

"Oh well!" She drank it off, with the air of closing a poor business deal. "Just the same as Frau Spühler's!" she said. "Is that all you want?"

"All I want you to drink. I'll bring you up some better stuff to-morrow."

"I'll be down to-morrow," she said carelessly.

"Not if I know it!"

"Whether you know it or not! I'm going to get my money, and I don't take money for nothing. Or medicine," she added. "What does this cost?"

He ignored the question.

"It's silly, you know, to talk about going downstairs to-morrow. You couldn't do it, however much you wanted to. Don't you realise that you're ill? You couldn't stand up for two minutes."

"Stand up? Of course I could!"

"Not for more than ten seconds."

"All right, look!" she said.

With all the appearance of vigour—it would not have deceived a first-year student—she jerked herself out of bed and stood, with her arms folded, barefoot on the bare floor; solemnly defiant. But Josef didn't even trouble to look. He pounced at the bed and ripped everything off it, twisted the six-weeks-dirty linen into one bundle and pitched it into the corner. For the time being the mattress—if you called it that—would have to stay. The rug he had brought went on top of it, then his own decke with sheets clean the day before. By that time she was limp and gasping. "You'd better sit down," he said quietly, and she sat on the side of the bed. He had brought up an old shirt of his own, it was coarse and much darned but better than what she was wearing and newly-washed. "I'd like you to put this on, it'll be comfier than that thing." He gathered the old bedclothes again and took them outside. He heard another burst of coughing, and when he re-entered she was lying back, her small ration of recovered strength all consumed; but she had changed into his shirt. That gave him confidence.

He said quietly, in the Plünnecke voice: "I'm going to tidy you up a bit." And slipped one of the towels under her shoulders.

It wasn't easy, working from the other side of the bed where a capricious joist prevented his kneeling upright; with nothing to stand the basin on but the bed itself, the soap collecting plaster and cobwebs the moment he put it down. But that was in the way of the trade. And he felt the pleasure of good workmanship as, without one motion of roughness, he cleaned the crust of grime away from the forehead, leaving the pale skin quite soft and fresh; as with delicate strokes of twisted cotton wool he purged the cavities of the eyes. Now a smear of vaseline where the skin was rough, now a clean handkerchief to dry the creases under the chin. Gentle, gentle, but quick, while the passive state lasted.

She did not interrupt him, however, she didn't wriggle or say anything. He became ambitious, and hating that a patient of his should have her hair in such a dirty tangle he set to work to comb it out and then shampoo it. "I've got to pull a bit," he said. "You've let it get in such a state . . . Did that hurt?" "Not much." And a little later, kneading the soapy mass and glancing at the face upside-down, he noticed the lips faintly smiling.

"Do you like this?" he asked.

"Fräulein Rother used to do it," was all she said.

He was eager to start a more thorough examination. It might be some days before he could get hold of a portable X-ray apparatus from the hospital, and in the meantime his verbal account of the pulmonary condition must be so meticulous as by itself to parry all scepticism. But the girl must have a rest first, he had to go carefully, he was not sure how far he had overcome her ignorant hostility.

"There now! Don't you feel more comfy?"

He looked round for something else to do, and realised that it had been a waste of time cleaning up the girl if the room was to stay in this condition. No, he wouldn't allow it. He went downstairs to the passage cupboard where the household things were kept and came back with another load: a

brush and pan, a pail of hot water, scrubbing brushes. With the same care that he had used on Minna, but without the gentleness, he set upon the filth in the room.

He did not dislike the work. This was his own patient, not an odd case in a long ward, not just a piece of Röstel's leavings. She was more than that, this decrepit parcel of humanity, she was the instrument for proving his case. (He thought of Wildelau, the pompous Dr. Wildelau who had snubbed him for daring to undertake research.) And with such an instrument he was ready to take unlimited trouble. Moving on hands and knees, with his head so close to the floor, he found the stench almost unbearable; but to see all the grease in flight before his brush, the woodbugs turning over in the brown, soapy wave, this was a new and quickening pleasure. To-morrow he would consult Herr Spühler on the subject of enlarging the window, later on he might do something about the plaster. Meanwhile his excitement must find release in vast exertion, and he'd have his patient's room clean if he had to scrub all night.

He thought the girl was asleep, but when he looked up she was watching him, with the isolated curiosity that he was beginning to find a nuisance. He could not help thinking of Dittmer's rats, the way they had watched him one day as he was cleaning out their cage; their eyes following each movement of his hands with a certain small shrewdness, with just a little apprehension. He said:

"Don't you want to sleep a bit?"

"No," she said, "not when there's something to watch. I can sleep when you've gone."

Curious, he thought, how self-assured she was, with nothing of an invalid's demeanour. Seeing her sitting up like this one could hardly believe that she was living with practically no lung at all.

"The room's looking better, isn't it!" he said.

"Yes. But it's not worth bothering. I only sleep here, no one ever sees it."

"Well, you'll be seeing it a good deal at present."

"D'you mean I'm going to be ill?"

"Yes, you're pretty ill. That chest, it's in a bad state."

"Yes," she said, "it hurts a lot. When I'm coughing, mostly." Then, "Am I going to die, do you think? I mean, fairly soon?"

That took him off his guard.

"You—you'll have to go carefully," he said. "You'll have to do what I tell you, take things easy." He got up and sat on the bed again, for the first time rather nervous; it was delicate and important, this, getting the mental attitude right. "Listen, Minna: I've taken on the job of getting you well again—quite well again—and I'm going to do it if you'll only help me—"

"I don't mind about it," she said. "You might just as well die as go on washing all those plates and things three times every day. She won't even give me new drying-cloths, it's awful drying all that stuff with the cloths always wet."

"But I'll get you some new cloths myself as soon as you're well again—"

"I don't see why I can't die if I want to," she said obstinately. "What's it got to do with anybody except me?"

He had to begin again.

"Now, listen, Minna! . . ."

A little afterwards it occurred to him that she had, at least, taken away the last of his scruples. What harm in gambling with your neighbour's money if your neighbour had no use for it?

FROM Bruddestrasse, shabby and foul-odoured, a flight of worn steps cuts between the workshops to go down in zig-zags to the ferry. In summer workpeople go that way at the dinner-hour to sit on the narrow terrace half-way down and eat their sandwiches, with the steam barges plodding below to amuse them. The movement of the scene is agreeable, drays and yellow trams jostling past the half-timbered wharfhouses; and the river always brings enough wind to clear away the brewery odour in which they spend most of their lives. On fine nights these steps are a place for lovers.

That river breeze which makes the terrace so pleasant in summer turns, by October, into a damp and bullying wind: a wind such as you can enjoy, in a hardy way, when you face it on wide moorlands. In a town its vigour is only spiteful, rattling windows, scattering rubbish as it cries through narrow streets; and to have it whipping about the face, as Erich Meisel had that night, is a trial of the steadiest temper. He was going home this way partly because it was dark and unfrequented; he had formed the habit, these last weeks, of avoiding casual encounters with his friends which might mean the price of drinks; and now, wretched with the chill and solitude, he wished he had gone through to the Drenkerstrasse and taken the tram.

Ten minutes before, he had been sitting in the Club, and that was the place to be on a winter night. Nothing but an old storeroom, with two glaring lights which were always flickering from some fault in the connection, a rusty stove belching smoke through its cracked lid; but it was warmed with the breath of thirty men, made cheerful by their loud

voices and brave songs. Nobody there as a rule but clerks and shopkeepers; yet they had the right spirit, those tradesmen, the old nation-spirit, believing that a man's worth lies in his own right arm. In that place he caught something which had belonged to his fathers, a comradeship of soldiers. There he could lose himself, forget the dinginess of Hartzinnfeld, the kitchen odours and the smell of polish which the draught took all along the corridors at Handelstrasse 149. To-night there had been two men of his own stamp, delegates from divisional headquarters at Frankfurt, one of them a general's son whom he had known in Berlin. They had gossiped a bit, he and Karl von Schüttenwalde, about the old Academy days. And Fuldenkraus's speech, promising victory over their persecutors far sooner than they imagined, had whipped the fighting blood in him till he had seemed on fire with courage. They had broken spontaneously into the party song, Karl gripping his hand, with one great shout they had reaffirmed their oath of loyalty. In that high moment he believed that he could never be lonely again.

That was barely fifteen minutes ago. And now he was in his deepest loneliness.

He had left the meeting before it closed, whispering some excuse. Karl would have wanted to take him somewhere afterwards, one of the hotels, and he couldn't face that: this suit, he had worn it every day for more than two years; and there was the eternal question of paying for drinks, tipping waiters. Yes, it would have been a glorious end to the evening: Karl and he together, affectionate and rather rowdy, with the bourgeoisie of Hartzinnfeld staring at them in envious disapproval. But the price was too high.

A swift 'goodnight.' The door closing, darkness and reality.

On the steps a man and woman passed, bound together with their arms. They stared at him in the scanty light, the man said something inaudible and the girl giggled. He hadn't

heard what the man said, but he recognized the local accent. They were blessed by their meanness, he thought, people like that: a place so small and mean as Hartzinnfeld was the only scene they knew, and fitted comfortably to their own small spirit. Well, he was not like that, thank God, he belonged to a larger world.

Belonged?

He had to clutch his hat, the wind was so capricious here. And with his other hand he held to the rail, frightened of stumbling; in the evening's excitement he had forgotten his hunger, but he felt the weakness now.

So silent here. The steps of the couple passing him had dwindled and ceased, there was no sound from the river; with the wind flooding his ears he heard only faintly the jangle of the trams which he saw crawling along the other bank. Those trams, they would be taking late-shift men along to the ironworks, men chatting and laughing, men who had a job. Others were lounging along the quay down there, workless like himself; he could just see them as they passed the lamps, just catch the twinkle of a lighted match. Yes, like himself, but he did not belong to them. They were born, that sort, to narrow lives, to shoddy clothes, scant rations. They had lost nothing, having no heritage. What he himself had lost he knew from a hundred glimpses: photographs in family albums, the chatter of other soldiers' sons at the Academy: enough to make a general picture of the life he should have had, the Mess's comradeship, the welcome rigour of military service. Yet it was not those things he grudged, the flavour of that life and its dignity. All he wanted was to serve his fatherland; and the fatherland had become too mean to want or merit his service.

The sound of laughter came to him feebly, carried across the water. A nation's poverty, he thought, is borne by every one. But her spiritual anguish has all to be suffered by the few who keep her soul.

The ferryman had gone off duty, he had to go and thump at the ferry house door. A woman with a candle, opening the door an inch or two, said that her husband had gone to bed, he was in pain with rheumatism: no doubt his honour would be willing to go round by the bridge. It was always like that in Hartzinnfeld, no one ever lacked an excuse for laziness.

"The ferry service is supposed to operate till 11.30," he told her. "I can wait while he dresses."

Standing here at the water's edge he could see the life of the other bank more clearly; but still as something separate from his own, unreal, as when you watch a street from a sick-room window: a waiter hurrying about a lighted café, always the rocking trams. For a moment he felt a huge impatience, longing to merge himself in that activity; and then a dread of it, knowing the loneliness of streets where no one spoke to him, laughter he did not share. Only the river, high in this season, the brown swirls travelling swiftly away from the town's infection, gave him a remote comfort: that was like his country as he dreamed it, like himself; it would flow as full and steady when those things had gone.

He shivered. The surface wind, wrapping about his neck and forehead, brought gusts of river fog, foul-odoured. From the coldness of his forehead he knew he would have neuralgia to-morrow, a pain sharper than fire. That fellow, why couldn't he hurry!

He was trying to recall the exaltation of the evening, but all he could think of now was the circumstance which had spoiled it. They had passed round a slip for subscriptions: divisional headquarters were opening a new propaganda fund, and every member was supposed to contribute according to his means. He had put himself down for ten Marks, the very highest sum he could hope to raise in the time. Some of the rank-and-file—lads who served behind counters—had promised fifteen or even twenty Marks. Karl von Schüttenwalde

had seen the list as it went round, he must have noticed Erich's entry. A fellow like that, naturally, would make no comment; neither would he ascribe the small subscription to any lack of zeal—Karl knew him too well. No, Karl would have drawn the obvious, the correct conclusion that he, Erich, had become a pauper. And it wasn't only Karl. The list would be posted for later subscriptions, every one of those boys would know that while Albert Terber, son of a petty house-agent, was giving twenty-five Marks Erich Meisel was only giving ten. That meant in practice that he would have to avoid the Club for a fortnight. Even then his position could not be the same. They would treat him as their equal, they might even call him by his first name . . .

The door behind him opened, the ferryman limped across to the boat and untied it. Erich said, getting in, "You've been a hell of a time."

He stood facing the bank he had left. That way, for a few moments, he could faintly enjoy the sense of isolation, freedom from the streets which had hedged and wearied him all day. Out here the air was fresh, like mountain air, and the smoothness of the boat's travel passed into his senses, as if some power of his own moved him so easily. The brown water lay astern like a silken fan. The ferryman was jabbering as he rowed, something about his four children and their lack of clothes, about what the ferry had earned before the war. "Nowadays they all go round by the bridge, no money, you see . . . comes of the politicians, what do they do? What's the good of working if the politicians throw it all away? . . . and now, you see, they all go round by the bridge . . ." But Erich wasn't listening. A thought had come as if a dark room were suddenly lighted: here was depth and stillness, here was purpose; from poverty and the Club's contempt, the country's rottenness, one leap would take him out of reach.

His friends would understand. They would recognise it as an act of supreme nobility.

But the chance of escape came without resolution. Huddled and pensive, he had not moved his feet when the stern swung in and the town surrounded him, voices close above his head, a motor bleating, the café's light sculpturing the boatman's face. That, too, had been a dream. Walking slowly up the steps he felt for a coin, found only a two-Mark piece, impulsively pitched it over his shoulder.

"Something for your children!"

He had meant to take a tram from the Lindenmeister crossing, risking an encounter with some one from the Club; but his stupid charity had made that impossible. And now, added to the constant soreness of his feet, he felt a small wriggling pain across the chest. Where the road was darkest he stopped to lean against a warehouse wall, watching the uncollared loads that joggled past in the frowsty comfort of the trams. A girl with crumpled skirts above her knees, breasts stuck out like mitres, came across the road to give him a pert good-evening; but a whistle from a man in a sleek overcoat made her turn and go off with him. Shivering, he turned the corner and began the climb towards the Mühlstrasse.

It was nearly twelve when he got home. As usual, a light was showing in his old room, the one which the Zep-pichmann creature had stolen; the door was open, and as he went along the passage he noticed that the room was empty. A sudden curiosity made him turn and go inside.

So this was Zeppichmann's idea of elegance and comfort: shelves and basins, shabby text-books, bottles all over the place. Well, Erich had expected nothing else. Bottles with neat little labels, they were the boundary-posts of such a fellow's mind. It was not even a doctor's room, it was a cheap apothecary's.

The neuralgia was beginning, the warmth of indoors

seemed to spur its attack. He crossed the room to look more closely at the line of bottles on the wall-shelf: among all these, surely there might be something to give him relief.

Most of the labels had only formulae which were meaningless. But one small bottle, standing out of its place, was marked *Tinctura Opii*. He knew what that was.

Laudanum: how did you take it? The usual dose was very small, he fancied, not more than a drop or two. Dangerous to take too much. And yet, what was the danger? Down there on the river he had seen the chance of peace, a deep and lasting peace which no one could steal from him. Close as it was, that peace had been fenced off by a fearful boundary, the gripping coldness of the water, horror of suffocation, the struggle . . . With this stuff, as he supposed, you slept, slept deeply, passed unknowing into the deepest of all sleeps. He could leave a message to say that his death was an act of protest, the only witness that an honourable man could make against a country fallen into the hands of charlatans. That message would be read in court, published in the newspapers . . . A current of warm emotion ran through his cheeks and temples: like his father, his grandfather, he would be remembered as one who had sacrificed himself for his nation's honour.

He took the top off the bottle and sniffed.

A board rattled outside, that loose board which Frau Spühler complained of once a week and her husband never remembered to nail down. He tried, in one movement, to put back the stopper and shove the bottle into his pocket, forgetting that he wore an overcoat with the pocket entrance vertical. When Josef appeared at the door the bottle was still in his hand.

He did not try to conceal it now: he wouldn't play schoolboy to this fellow. Hardly glancing at Josef, he held up the bottle and turned it round to read the label again. He said, carelessly:

"This is laudanum, isn't it?"

Josef nodded and smiled.

"Yes, that's quite right. I was making up a draught for the maid—poor Minna, she's in a bad way with that cough. Can I—won't you sit down? I've got cigarettes somewhere—"

Still looking at the bottle, Erich said:

"No. No, I only came in here to see how you've arranged my room. I thought as you were so keen on the room you'd probably have some special furniture for it—good pictures and so on. Of course my pictures are only relatively good—"

"Oh, but they're excellent, Herr Meisel! I admired them very much when I was moving them. No, I'm afraid I've nothing like that, I look on this as just a workroom—"

Erich said, hardly moving his lips, "Yes, I see that . . . I looked at it differently." Then, "I'm going to borrow this, if you don't mind. Or for that matter, even if you do."

He was strolling towards the door, but Josef came round and stood in his way, still smiling.

"Excuse me, Herr Meisel, but I'm afraid—I can't—that, you see, is a very dangerous drug, it mustn't be in the hands of any one who doesn't understand these things—"

"I understand it all right. I'm not an ignoramus—"

"No, but please, Herr Meisel, that drug must only be used by qualified doctors—"

Erich, standing with his feet apart, caressing the bottle, surveyed Josef with a leopard's eyes, taking his time. He said softly:

"Just listen a minute! A young hobnail from the slums who comes into a house like this at no one's invitation but his own has got to learn a few things—"

"Herr Meisel," Josef said earnestly, "I can see you're not well, you look feverish. Won't you sit down a minute,

let me make you up something? Please, I should like to do that! No charge—just as a friend—”

“If I ever want your damned professional attention,” Erich said, “I shall tell you. Meanwhile, will you please get out of my way!”

Smiling again, Josef stood aside. But as Erich passed he grabbed at the bottle.

Erich said between his teeth:

“Let that go, will you, you young bast—”

“No, please, Herr Meis—”

The blow of Erich’s fist, delivered at such close range, would have broken the jaw of a nicely-nurtured man; but not the jaw of Josef, who had fought the pick of his contemporaries in all the alleys of Richterhausen. Josef simply dropped back, surprised and smarting. But the bottle crashed on the floor.

It was Erich who smiled now.

“Well, that’s smashed the bloody thing,” he said.

“Do you know,” said Josef, taut with fury, “that bottle cost nine Marks! I’ll ask you to pay for that!—”

Erich laughed. The sting in his knuckles had, for the moment, driven the neuralgia right away. He went on to his own room, laughing copiously.

BEFORE making the first injection, Josef smoked a cigarette in his room: not to steady his nerves—they never gave the smallest trouble—but to satisfy a certain instinct for drama. He would go without his cigarette on Saturday.

The shiny instrument-case he had bought lay on the table: 28 Marks, with neat compartments for ampoules and a section to hold the working diary. Also a little book for Minna, *The Adventures of Hedwig Sachse*—she had said she enjoyed reading. It was all very extravagant, but extravagance is curiously easy to one who has spent the greater part of his savings in a few weeks. (The bill for Bovine Tuberculin alone had reached 180 Marks.) Yes, he had used up a big slice of his money and the whole of his spare time. How many hours since he had come to Hartzinnfeld?—it must have run into hundreds. In a peculiar way that expenditure of time seemed the heavier price: he could feel that in the tiredness of his tough body, the headaches he was beginning to notice. In all that time a man with his wits about him could have done many things, could have made money in odd ways, tried to get on with people, improved himself. And about this gamble he was under no delusions. His polyvalent tuberculin might not work. You might get 100% positive results with animal subjects and a lethal result with humans—he knew that. If he only succeeded in accelerating the disease in this girl it meant that five years' work was wasted. Then he would have to decide whether to risk another five years, another ten, twenty years—poverty, overwork, loneliness—or to become just a good doctor. It was frightening, the thought of becoming a plain, good doctor.

One might as well be a schoolmaster, like the idiotic Rupf.

The cigarette was starting to burn his fingers. He crushed it and put the stump away in a little tin he kept for cigarette ends. On to battle!

The girl grinned when he came in. She always grinned nowadays. So: he was not such a bad doctor!

The psychological side of this case had been tricky. From his first visit to her room he had understood the girl through and through: she was an empty adolescent without any kind of mental ability; she had acquired, for self-protection, a special insolence made out of certain poses picked up in the schoolroom; she had a cheap armoury of gauche polysyllables, borrowed apparently from this Fräulein Rother for whom she had once conceived a Schwärmerei. It was the *gamin* type, the would-be adventuress serving in a beer-garden: you found it in all the textbooks of psychotherapy. But it had proved a harder type to break down than the textbooks said. This Minna had answered his cheerfulness with sulks, his gravity with something like mockery. She had never shown him the smallest respect, and yet his efforts at intimate conversation had been treated with incomprehension. She would not talk about herself, she revealed none of the trifling vanities which can be exploited. Hardest of all, she did not seem to want his or any one else's company. She lived in some foolish daydream and was quite content with that.

But he had brought her as far as acquiescence. He had been so patient, always treating her as if her own wishes were paramount. 'You will let me come and attend to you again to-morrow? Just to make you comfortable!' At first her answer had been 'If you want to!' And now it was 'Yes, Herr Doktor, that's all right.' The grin she gave him now, that was another advance. It meant that she recognised him as a human being of some kind. He had, in professional terms, made psychological contact.

"This new window," he said, sitting down on his home-made stool, "it makes a difference, doesn't it! Makes the room fresher."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Look, I've got you a book, an adventure story. You told me you'd like something to read."

"Oh yes, yes. Thank you."

She took his gift with a trace of pleasure, but when she read the title her face was puzzled, disappointed.

"Do you think it's too hard for you to read?" he asked. "I don't think there are any difficult words."

"No, I suppose not. I haven't read a book like this before."

"Oh? What sort of books have you read?"

"Only what Fräulein Rother gave me."

That Rother woman again!

"What were those?"

"Poetry, most of them. There was a book called *Hermann und Dorothea*. Have you read that?"

"No. I've heard of it."

"And one called *Das Lied von der Glocke*."

"We did bits of that at my school," he said. "Now listen, I'm going to try something new to-day. The way you're breathing—that pain in the chest—it won't ever get right if we don't go for it. I've got some stuff here I've made specially, it's a kind of medicine only I put it into your arm. A bit of a prick—it hardly hurts at all . . ."

As he got out his tools, chatting like a conjuror, he was eyeing her obliquely for general condition: often one saw more in these sidelong appraisals than in the formal examination which followed. He was lucky, he thought. The colour in the face was good, the texture of the pupils normal. He might have waited a month without getting a better day for her to resist the primary reaction.

"I'm going to listen to your heart," he said.

She said rather fretfully: "You did that yesterday. It can't sound all that different."

"Oh, can't it!"

The day's excitement slightly affected his muscles, making his movements a little clumsy; but his brain was going as neatly as a jenny, noting and holding every detail for the record: pulse, respirations, resonance. Pulse was interesting, down to 98.

"You're feeling better than you did a fortnight ago?" he asked her.

"Yes, I'm quite all right now."

'All right!' But undoubtedly the general condition was improved, improved rather remarkably. The change might be partly due to normal fluctuation, but only partly. His own rough-and-ready nursing had something to do with it, the scouring he had given the room, the new nightgown and clean sheets, above all the new window which he and Herr Spühler had constructed together. The thought came, as he bent over her listening to the rhonchi:

'Suppose I'd given the case to old Vollmuth up at the hospital? A scientifically constructed chalet, first-class nursing, the sweet air from the pines. Would the pulse be down to 90 by now? Would Vollmuth, in the end, have made a job of it?'

An odd sentence from Schankhäuschen's Manual floated into his mind's eye (at the top of the grubby page, underlined by the book's last owner). 'In such cases sanatorium treatment is indicated: and where there is doubt a period of such treatment should always precede experiment with tuberculins . . .' And Schankhäuschen, after all, was not a nature fanatic . . . Appearances did suggest that this particular case was one which might benefit from Vollmuth's pedestrian methods. If the patient were offered her choice, and had wit enough to understand the alternatives as well as he did, she would most likely opt for sanatorium.

It wasn't too late to hand the case over. He could make up some sort of story for Vollmuth, be a little imprecise about dates.

He found that his hands and tongue had stopped moving, he saw that the girl was watching him with curiosity.

"What are you thinking about?" he asked.

She said: "Guinea-pigs. Frau Spühler says you've got guinea-pigs in your room. What do you do to them?"

"Do to them?" The ratchet of his brain slipped, it was a physical sensation. "I give them medicine," he said; and then the rest of the lie came easily. "Yes, they're sick, poor things—they belong to a friend of mine, he asked me to look after them and try and get them better."

"But one of them died, Frau Spühler told me."

"Yes. Yes, I was terribly upset about that. But it was in a very bad way when it came to me, I couldn't do anything for it."

She nodded. She seemed quite satisfied.

"Does he pay you—your friend?" she asked.

"Pay me? Oh well, no—no, nothing to speak of. A trifle—just what their food costs me."

"But you can't go on doctoring everybody for nothing. How can you live? I wouldn't do Frau Spühler's filthy work for nothing."

He said quickly: "Oh, but I get paid at the hospital. That's where my real work is. I only do these odd jobs because I like it. It helps me, you know, it's good practice."

"I see," she said; and then, with perfect simplicity, "Am I good practice?"

Oh, damn and blast the woman!

No, he would not consider any sentimental point of view. If you took the standpoint of every patient who came your way you would never get anywhere in research, you would always be wondering and doubting. He said gently, smiling:

"No, Minna, I only give you my treatment because I like you. It's nice to work for people you like occasionally. Well now, let's have that arm of yours."

He held her arm very tenderly. With an artist's care, with something of an artist's satisfaction, he painted a neat circle of formaldehyde.

"Now," he said, "this is where you're going to feel a little tiny prick."

"Is that what's going to make my chest better?"

"Yes yes, I hope so. Now still, please, just keep as still as you can!"

HE WAS glad to have got the first step over.

The attack of sentimentality had been quite unexpected. He supposed that every scientist was subject to such dangers in the early stages, a moment when the patient's private interest blocked out the view of one's objective. Well, he had stood his ground, and the onslaught would not come again. If the girl suffered pain under his treatment, if in the end he lost her, he would certainly feel a personal regret; for she was not ill-looking now that he had cleaned her up, and there was something attractive in her simplicity. But nothing would make him waver now. The supreme experiment had started.

He began to calculate dates. Nine weeks, he reckoned, was the minimum in which he could expect any reaction. Dosage would then be up to 0.12 C.C. D5. In fourteen weeks . . .

To-morrow he would scrub the floor again, using some of the hospital soap; and he would substitute his own mattress for the lousy thing she had at present. Possibly get her a new pillow. He was feeling already a possessive pride in her, the pride a man takes in some piece of machinery he has put together. She was something far more important than his first private patient: the instrument of his inventive genius, the screen on which new knowledge, so laboriously designed, might be projected. Oh yes, at the sanatorium she would have lived under better therapeutic conditions, received more constant attention; but for Vollmuth she would only have been one patient in the endless succession, one more article on the travelling band. If Vollmuth cured her

she would simply go back into circulation, back to Frau Spühler's draughty, underlighted kitchen. If Josef killed her she would still have been some use.

Stop, enough, mustn't think like that! The sickly gas of sentimentality was leaking in again. Figures, they were Josef's business, figures, records, charts. To-day's entry in the record would have to be minutely accurate.

He cleared a space at the end of the bench, moved the electric bulb which he had fixed on a running flex. The record-book, where was it? Not in its proper compartment in the instrument-case. Oh yes, he remembered, the book had fallen off the bed just as he was measuring out the dose; he had picked it up and crammed it in his pocket. He was annoyed, now, to see that it was badly crumpled and had a brown stain across the cover.

When he opened it he did not see his carefully ruled margins, his own neat handwriting. It was covered, page after page, with the swaying, stumbling hand of a child.

Unpardonable carelessness! He had come away with Minna's scribbling book by mistake. He must run up again quickly and get his own book before she started reading it: to let her understand the grim details of her condition might be disastrous.

But his alarm lasted only a moment. Ridiculous to suppose that she could make head or tail of his record, with its tabulated data, figures and symbols. She would learn as much from an Egyptian papyrus. He smiled, turning over Minna's pages: what a contrast with his own precision, this caricature of handwriting, this battlefield of blots and smudges. What was it all about—the story of Minna's life? With a sudden, pale curiosity he began to read.

‘ANOTHER plate last night. Smithereens. The Witch went on for 20 mins, all about sense of duty etc: I said you can’t expect a plate not to smash the floor being brick like that. She said why do you drop it on the floor then. I said there’s such a hell of a pile of plates after supper one of them’s got to fall off, it was cracked anyway. I said I can’t go on washing all those plates three times a day not with this feeling giddy the way I do, why can’t you send the Frog to help, what does he do all day long except read the newspapers. So then she slapped me and I laughed and she cried. Then afterwards I cried because the Witch hasn’t got hardly any money on account of the Leopard not paying and the Social Democrats ruling the country wrong, and she gets pains in the back which are worse than pains in the chest. I shall tell Fräulein Rother and God.

‘Fräulein Rother came last night when I was waiting to clear away supper. She came and sat in the Witch’s chair. Her robe was made of peacock’s wings and her hair was like a waterfall of golden sparks. I told her I was rude to the Witch and she said I must get up at 4 next morning and do the front passage the Witch generally does. So I did that this morning.

‘Sick again, no breakfast. I got the pain, doing Herr Barthol’s room, the bit behind Herr Barthol’s writing table where you can’t get at the dust with the nails sticking up and catching my clout. The pain was like a hot dark sea. It is all right if you don’t try to get to the shore again, you must go where the sea takes you, you must be like a fish in the sea. Minna went deep down into the sea, Minna was not fright-

ened, it was hot down there and she swam easily like the fishes do. The grey fish came to swim beside me, his body is like the evening clouds, he is the sign of God's humility. Minna spoke to the fish, she asked why God had sent her into the sea of pain, the fish said that Minna was proud and God must punish her. Minna had been too proud, she thought she was better than all the people in the Witch's house, even better than Herr Rupf. But when you go far down in the sea it is not too hot any more, God does not punish you so much, you can breathe quite easily there.

'Down there I was quiet and not lonely or frightened. I swam with great strokes thrusting back a hill of water thrusting a mountain of hot water at each great stroke. My feet stamped against the water I sprang from the mound of water on which my feet had been, my head pierced through the range of waters like a scythe's stroke cutting the young soft grass. Here the darkness of the sea was broken, the wave of darkness broke into a chain of quiet hills. Here I saw the sun's rosy light showing behind the hills of darkness, like the darkness of the Tastehausen forest pitched on morning sky, like the dark shadows on the curtain of Fräulein Rother's room. Here the sun's light breaking the dark sea cut ribbons of rose and gold, the mist that fell across the sea was gold and green. The fish that swam with me caught a new coat from the sun, his new coat was of green and gold, shining like new snow on the Tastehausen hills, like the evening robes in Berghauer's window. I laughed as I swam and the fish laughed beside me, we were so strong against the water, I and the fish that Fräulein Rother sent to make me lonely. Fräulein Rother's fish laughed like a trumpet, our laughing was like the wind in the pine trees at Tastehausen and the music of Tastehausen orchestra in the municipal gardens, it was like all God's angels laughing together in the morning.

'Minna passed by the cave, the dark cave in the bed of the sea. I thought the sea's current wrapped about Minna

the garment of water folding Minna's body would draw her to the dark sea-cave where Fräulein Rother lies. I thought I felt the current drawing Minna's body, I saw in the shadows of the caves the satin pillows where they stretch in sleep, in long unbroken sleep, those ones, where they hear no sound but the water's music, the quiet music of the water warmly flowing, the water flowing through their deep cool chambers. Minna would care for the sleepers in that cave, Minna would get up early to get their food, she would dry their plates with a silken cloth, a new silk cloth for every plate she dried. She would not be tired there. But the Witch's voice came down to call her back, Minna was frightened and her arms beat hard against the water, her body rose again, leaving the quietness of the coloured shadows, she struggled up to the high hot sea. The hands of pain caught her by throat and forehead, she could not sink again to the quiet water, she saw the cold light far above and fought to free herself from the angry pain.

'The Witch said that only lazy sluts went to sleep at their work, she said I must come back after dinner and do Herr Varthol's room all over again. She said she would take fifty pfennige off my wages. I told the Witch she was a crumple-bellied sow with a wasp in its mouth, I said you can't clean a floor properly with nails sticking up, I told her the dust all got into my nose and throat and made me sleepy. She said I would find myself in the gutter if I talked to her like that, I said the gutter wouldn't be so hot and sticky as her filthy kitchen. Frog Spuhler came to the kitchen after dinner, he said the Witch had gone to bed cum headache.

'I will write more diary to-morrow night. Too tired now.

'I woke up early and the pain was bad. I cried a long time. I wasn't crying for the pain hurting me, I was crying because I can't beat it, the pain takes hold of my head to make me angry and proud. That is why I am cruel to the Witch.

'But it is only the wicked who are proud and cruel when they have pain. Fräulein Rother had cancer of the breast, the man who came to do her up for the funeral told me that. Sometimes in the classroom she went quite white, her face was like the statue of the old queen in the municipal museum, she held the sides of the desk as if she was trying to break it, she could not speak for a long time and all of us were frightened. But afterwards she said she was sorry to have made us frightened, it was only a chill she said, and then she smiled and was specially kind to us. Fräulein Rother told me the pain did her good, it put her in the same family as the blind and cripples and hunchbacks and all the poor bastards with hare lips and squidgy eyes and spotty faces. I said it was how you were made, to feel like that when the pain got you. She told me she was not made like that, she was made proud and wicked, she had only got like that. But the headaches don't make me get like that.

'To-day when I was doing out the flues I thought it was because the pain wasn't bad enough. Fräulein Rother used to go as if she was being frozen from the inside, she bit her lips so as once there was blood there afterwards, she made a singing noise like the old dog Fritz when he was asleep. We could all of us feel it then inside ourselves how it was hurting her. I thought while I was doing the flues, it must have been because it was so bad that she got so beautiful and loving. But oh God I don't want that oh dear God I can't put up with pain like that, it only makes me worse oh God, the pains I have, I don't want to go all white and sweating and have my face twitching and my finger nails dug into my hands like that. Oh God isn't there some other way to kill the wicked part of me, it's only the outside part that's proud and selfish, couldn't you take that away without so much freezing pain like Fräulein Rother's?

'To-morrow I'll do the beds in the Witch's room and Frau Rupf's room, that the Witch generally does.

'Herr Rupf spoke to me this morning, he stopped in the

passage and asked what I did on my holidays. It is moving to feel that Herr Rupf is my friend, in this place I haven't many friends. I didn't say anything because my mouth wouldn't work and I heard the Witch calling.

'A lot of coughing to-day. I was frightened in case the Witch saw my handkerchief that had got all bloody. Must go down and clean it in the sink when the Witch has gone to bed.

'The coughing would not make me angry and cruel if it wasn't for pride. It is because I think all the people in this house except Herr Rupf and the young doctor are all stupider than me and I am the only important person. I suppose when you get old you get better about that, you get to see it isn't other people's fault that they're so stupid and unimportant. I want to get old so that I can be humble enough to love other people.

'But it takes so long to get old. The days go by like the tired horses dragging sandcarts up the Hügelsstrasse, the days are so heavy and there are still so many to come.

'Oh God let me get back in the end to Fräulein Rother, don't let her get too far away, don't let her forget me. Fräulein Rother's hands were as gentle as a dove's breast, her voice was warm like morning sunshine, she was never too tired or ill to talk to me. Even if my heart is proud I will do unselfish things, I will do more work to make up what I owe Frau Spühler. And if the pride has to be burnt away with pain I will go into that fire with my heart singing as your own saints used to sing, I will keep my eyes wide open looking for Fräulein Rother beyond the flames, I will march with head held bravely and gather the flames to me like gathering sheaves of wheat. But oh God don't take my brain away, let my brain stay clear to read some books and listen to the talk when I go into the dining-room. Only hurt me enough to make me humble like Fräulein Rother was, enough to make me love all lovely things, and all the ugly things, as Fräulein Rother did . . .'

HE WAS sleeping badly, a new experience. Having got to bed shortly before two o'clock he regularly woke at about half-past three, with head aching and a dead tired body, his brain fully conscious. The darkness became intolerable then, he would turn on the light and go through some notes, try to do some calculations he had jotted down for odd moments. But at that hour his mind worked like a leaky pump, the room's familiar shape oppressed him, he could always hear faintly, like the faulty undertones of an engine, the noise of Minna coughing.

To a patient in that condition he would glibly have advised a change of scene. He had never thought of taking a holiday himself: with the Zeppichmanns the word holiday meant a day when you were obliged to close your shop and lose money: but now, two days after the third injection, he decided to give himself an evening's amusement.

A copy of *Hartzimfelde Zeitung* which he found in the staff mess gave him a choice of entertainments: there were five political meetings in different parts of the town, Rosa Wittke was singing in the Feurich-Saal, Dr. Hermann Linderstädt was to lecture on Paranoia. No, those would not do, he wanted gaiety, he wanted to talk and laugh with his friends . . . Friends? He hadn't any.

He had almost decided to spend the evening reading the medical papers when he thought of an invitation that Ahlwarth had given him. Dr. Ahlwarth, the young assistant in the out-patients' department who was always enjoying some obscure joke of his own, had treated him most amiably. He had said, shortly after Josef's arrival, "If you're ever at

a loose end, come round to my digs. 24C Zeugerstrasse. My girl and I are nearly always there, we keep open house . . .” Yes, one ought to have some friends, to get some practice in social behaviour. An evening call was not irregular, he supposed: it was seven o’clock now, and by the time he got to the other side of the town the Ahlwarths would certainly have finished their evening meal. After hunting in the chest of drawers he found that he had one clean collar.

As the crowded tram pitched and squealed down the Langebergstrasse he remembered that he had said nothing to his patient about going out. As a rule he made a last visit shortly before nine o’clock to note her temperature and make her comfortable for the night. Well, that last visit was scarcely more than a formality; she would surely have the sense to turn the light out and settle down by herself. But he should have said something: the ridiculous diary had shown him that the girl suffered from an advanced neurosis, and he had to keep her mind’s field as smoothly rolled as he could. For a moment he thought of getting off the tram and going back.

That was ridiculous, too fussy. From the shop lights passing he saw they were near the river now, and he had taken a through ticket to the Burchardt terminus. He kept his seat, and got off at the Statsfurter Square.

Remotely, as he stood and shivered on the pavement, he realised that he was glad to go for fourteen hours without seeing her. The hospital wards were tedious enough, but there you saw a succession of invalids, most of them only once a day; you did or said what was required and passed on, it was the nurses’ business to see to them after that, the nurses had brain enough for nothing else. To see a feeble-minded girl three times a day, to spend from ten to thirty minutes every time in her mousetrap of a room, always feeling the intentness of her strange eyes: that was a heavy trial to a young man’s patience. He deserved an evening off.

After ten minutes the wriggling lights of the Burchardt tram came loose from the thicket of lamps beyond the river, it tilted up and swung across the bridge. This was to take him into a part of the town he did not know, and the tram's population gave him the key of it: faces like perished rubber, boots that were hardly more than sandals, a boy's cheek and forehead raked with impetigo. For the first time he wondered whether he had been right to put on his better suit. The smell of these people was familiar, a smell of wool baked in sweat, the drifting aromas of vegetables and fish. In his boyhood every house except his own had its smell on that foundation, and even in boyhood he had found it distasteful. Now it had become as strange to him as doublet-and-hose, and he was faintly surprised that Ahlwarth, unpretentious as he was, lived on such a tram-route. Yes, the blue serge was probably wrong.

Already he felt that this evening was a mistake, he was spending time and getting nothing for it. This tram moved like a wounded ox, it seemed to be always waiting in the loopways. His fellow passengers, accustomed all their lives to awaiting other people's convenience, sat in a dull complacency, the air grew thicker with their breathing. In a bout of nausea Josef shut his eyes and at once he was back in Minna's room.

The state of the arm, that was his real worry. The general condition was worse, but he had expected such a setback at this stage. He had also expected a local morbid reaction at the place of injection. But the swelling should have abated by now. There was a rash he could not precisely identify spreading right down to the wrist, and a still larger area of cutaneous sensitivity, which interfered with the girl's sleep. He remembered a case that Plünnecke had mentioned where an ordinary calf-lymph inoculation had produced toxic reactions so severe that the arm had to be amputated. Supposing, now, that it came to calling in a surgeon! That would

not only mean the end of this experiment: one way or another news would reach the Moltke Hospital almost as soon as the surgeon arrived and then there would be Wildelau to settle . . . Perhaps he should have applied a Zeliche poultice before leaving her this evening . . . He was beginning to feel it like an ulcer in his temples, this anxiety which he had to carry all by himself.

It was starting to rain when they got to the terminus. The conductor, pointing eastwards, told him that Zeugerstrasse was under a kilometre that way.

This was another town, it was like a city punished by war. Sparse lamps showed a house in every three boarded for sale, a window in every ten gave the street a wisp of light. The people were abroad; but they weren't hurrying to reach the shops before closing hour, there was no group of boys shouting their way along the road as they did in Handelstrasse. They stood in a line against the wall, the people here, with no protection against the gusty rain; they did not seem to notice it. They stared at Josef as he passed, discussed him in a phlegmy undertone; and where there was light enough to see their faces they were like the faces of a theatre chorus, the eyes feverishly brilliant.

He had come to a web of streets, a camp of little houses thrown where it took the builder's fancy.

"Can you direct me please," he asked a boy sitting on a doorstep, "I'm trying to find my way to Zeugerstrasse."

The child giggled.

"Zeugerstrasse? He's gone away, gone away, gone away a-wenching. Knock on the bed and pull the sheets and surely you will find him."

But a woman leaning from an upper window called hoarsely that he should go straight on, and in another hundred yards he reached a street of greater maturity, an antenna of Hartzinnfeld trimmed with bourgeois houses. This was Zeugerstrasse, and the house he wanted stood right op-

posite, a villa of some pretension, huge in the darkness. He saw no light in any window, the bell-pull only brought a rattle of rusty wire and the patter of plaster falling; but the door stood open and he went inside.

The air was musty, and his footsteps on the tiled floor cracked hollowly against the high bare walls. It was like a theatre when the audience has gone. There were voices somewhere, he thought they came from above; and a door continually banging. He struck a match and went up the bare staircase to the first landing, another match and on again. But at the second landing he stopped, a little scared by the weight of emptiness. He thought he could hear, now, the sound of a bed creaking; and suddenly a woman's voice quite close to him said, "Oh God, my arm, my arm!"

He ran then, back to the stairs, clung to the handrail and let his feet find what steps they could, was down both flights before he could collect himself. The pan of light from the door, with the moist air blowing in, brought him to his senses. What feebleness, to let his nerves play such a trick! But he could still have sworn the voice he had heard was Minna's.

As he stood in the darkness, letting the vibration of his body work itself out, the rectangle of light was broken; a man who smelt of onions came in and began to feel his way down the passage towards the back of the house. He would have walked right into him if Josef had not spoken.

"Excuse me, I wonder—"

The man jumped.

"Who's that?"

A pair of hands, skinnily strong, seized Josef's wrists as neatly as if the two men stood in broad daylight.

"Keep still," the man said hoarsely, and called out, "Franz! Come here, quick!"

From a lower floor footsteps came up to the end of the passage, there a door was kicked open, letting out a sprinkle

of light. Mercifully, it was Ahlwarth's voice that Josef heard.

"Well, Neuling, what the devil's wrong with you?"

"Bloody spy!" Neuling shouted.

Josef brought his heels together.

"Doctor Zeppichmann!" he said.

As the candle which Ahlwarth carried came nearer he could see that the man who held him so fiercely had a boy's figure; only his dark head, dripping with rain, showed the size and hardness of a man's: a miner's head, the face spare and white, eyes far recessed and brilliant.

"There is some misunderstanding!" Josef said.

Ahlwarth, coming up to them, broke into laughter.

"Spy indeed—you slug-wit! Let him go, fool, this is my friend Zeppichmann, the most respectable member of the Moltke staff—we're all of us proud of our Doctor Zeppichmann!"

He took an arm of each and led them along the passage.

"Well, how was I to know!" Neuling said gloomily.

"The bastards are everywhere, they follow me about."

But at the end of the passage he stopped and took Josef's hand. "Apologies, brother!" he said warmly. "I get scared, you see, in dark places. They shot at me once, down on the canal bank. It's like that, you get scared. People that smell flush, always scared of them! No harm intended."

"I myself sometimes find darkness rather alarming," Josef said.

They followed Ahlwarth down to the basement.

The long room, floored with cheap linoleum, had the smell of a beershop, and all its hardworn furniture might have come from beerhouse auctions.

"I'm sorry the light's not better," Ahlwarth said. "They've cut off the current for some reason so we have to make do with these lamps. This is Friede Tscherloh who lives with me."

Unused to the light, Josef saw indistinctly a plump girl who lay across a bed at the end of the room. Nervously, he went that way and clicked.

"Doctor Zeppichmann."

Fräulein Tscherloh took out her cigarette but did not move.

"You should have come earlier," she said in the friendliest way, "that awful Dreigerschmidt has been here, he's finished all the beer."

"Dreigerschmidt, he's always in front of me!" Neuling said, with a child's temper in his voice.

Friede laughed.

"Come here then and give me a kiss! . . . There, is that better?" She swept her eyes round to Josef. "You too?"

"Well, thank-you, gnädiges Fräulein, no!" Josef said unhappily. "Er—not this evening!"

"She means well," Ahlwarth remarked. "I'm sorry about the beer. One minute, I've got cigarettes somewhere. Yes, you must have one. Wait a mo', just let me shift this gramophone . . . Now, you can sit here—I'm sorry the place is so untidy, the one trouble with Friede is she's lazy. Yes, my precious, you're a lazy slut and you know it, you make my life a misery."

But he did not look unhappy. At the hospital he was always pertly cheerful, here his cheerfulness had become a glowing warmth. With a young host's eager restlessness he shoved his clumsy length about the room, smiling, raking his lanky hair, hunting for cigarettes; stopped to wipe some beer-slop off the arm of Josef's chair, to pat Neuling's shoulder, to plant a resounding kiss on Friede's cheek.

"You," he said to Neuling, "you ought to be at home looking after your family instead of trying to murder respectable doctors in my mansion. Who've you got to put your children to bed?"

Neuling grinned. "I did it myself an hour ago. All four of them."

"I thought it was five now," Friede said.

Neuling shut his eyes.

"No, four it is. The last one died, thank God." He turned, smiling, to Josef. "My wife's got trouble in the breast," he said, "not much, you know, but painful. You'll understand that, being a doctor. That's why I mind the children—I've nothing else to do. Hurts her, you understand, across here. Herr Ahlwarth here'll tell you, cancer he says it is. That right?"

Ahlwarth nodded, and Neuling smiled.

"Well, there it is. It's bad at night, you know, comes on then. She cries a lot, and that sets the children off. That's why I go out of an evening, I can't stand that, not all through the night. Cheerful girl she always was—a good girl too, earned ten Marks a week doing the schoolhouse over there, kept the children lovely. I don't know how it is, but I can't stand it when she's blubbing."

Ahlwarth, sitting on the table and playing an imaginary violin, said with sudden ferocity:

"I'll get it fixed this week, I'll have her in the hospital if I have to murder some one!" He turned to Josef. "Five times I've been to Wildelau already, and all he says is that the cancer ward's full-up. Did you ever hear such impertinence!"

Josef said modestly: "I believe they are overcrowded in that department—"

"Then why the devil can't they enlarge the department! Why can't they stick up a new building, get some more doctors and nurses. D'you think there are no doctors out of a job? And no bricklayers?"

"I imagine it would be a question of capital—"

"Exactly, yes, capital! If there were two hundred wealthy Junkers on the waiting-list, d'you suppose Wildelau would simply tell 'em the ward was full? D'you think he'd say he must limit the number of cases received in order to maintain his nursing standards? You'd think from the way

he talks that medicine is just a decoration of life, practised by enthusiastic artists!"

Friede, rolling over on to her back, said:

"But, Franz, darling, if the money isn't there I don't see how Wildelau is going to make it."

"The money *is* there!" Ahlwarth said furiously. "Go and look in the windows of Obermüller's and you'll see evening gowns priced at RM 600, you'll see fur coats at three or four thousand. Well, some one's going to buy that stuff, I suppose!"

"Well, Franz!"

The door had opened very quietly, Josef had only noticed a whiff of brandy. The man who stood there, smiling, had a grey suit that matched his hair, perfectly tailored; only the cloth was thin, covered with stains, and the trousers were frayed at the shoes.

"A bloody night, don't you think?"

He came forward with a popular actor's confidence, pushed a hand into Ahlwarth's hair, went over to the bed and patted Friede's quarters.

"Got a job to-day!" he said. "Selling tickets for some screecher. Agreeable. Remuneration dainty. It lasted, unhappily, for just five hours. Result!" He pulled up a bottle from his trousers. "All right, Friede, don't get so excited!"

Ahlwarth gazed at him abstractedly.

"Listen, Major! I was telling these people that if the population of Hartzinnfeld can afford RM 600 for an evening dress it can afford to put more beds in the hospital."

The Major nodded.

"I expect you're right. Has no one in this bloody outfit got a knife?—I can't get this cork out with my finger-nails. Yes, I expect you're right. More beds, I'm all in favour. Complete with lovely occupants. Only question is, where the devil d'you find the wherewithal to pay the lovely occupants?"

"I tell you," said Ahlwarth, "there's money in this town enough—"

"Yes yes, I know there's money in this town. There's everything you want in this bloody town except a job. (Wash this mug for me, Friede, there's a duck.) Take me back to the war, that's what I say. They treated you like dirt and they fed you like swine, but at least they gave you something to do. How's your lady, Neuling?"

"Not good. She blubs almost all the time."

"I say, I'm sorry about that. I'm damned sorry. Mine's dead, thank God, so I don't have that worry. Here, have a drink. Prosit! Here's to all the swine that have got us like we are. You, I don't know your name—"

"Doctor Zeppichmann, if you please."

"—That'll do as well as anything. Drink! Go on, get on with it! Here's to the swine aforesaid, may they burn!"

"The question," Ahlwarth said, "is—which particular swine?"

The Major threw out a generous arm.

"The bankers, the stock-wanglers, the landowners; town councillors, pimps and pawnbrokers. Any one who's had a good square meal since the war. That'll do to get on with. Prosit! May they scorch slowly!"

Josef modestly drank.

He thought that without rudeness he might take his leave now, but did not know quite how to manage it. Perhaps he need only say a word in Ahlwarth's ear, thanking him for his hospitality and begging to be excused, then make a general bow and slip upstairs. He began edging his way along the wall to where Ahlwarth, with his back turned to the Major, was now arguing trenchantly with Friede.

His movement was cut off. The door, violently kicked, swung open again, a girl with grey hair hanging in rat-tails round her yellow face splashed into the room, a trio of

men behind her. "God!" the girl said, "how this place stinks! Whose is the Schnapps?"

"Help yourself!" the Major said. "Here, use Neuling's glass, he's not more consumptive than you are."

"A pleasure!" Neuling said.

Ahlwarth looked round and smiled.

"No business for you here, Anna. The Major had five Marks but he's blued it. No one else has got any."

The girl drank the glass half-empty and passed it to the man behind her.

"I don't want business," she said quietly, "I want some one's face smashed in. Heard what they've done to Paul?"

The man behind her, gently stroking the red skin on the side of his face where eye and cheek were missing, said: "Ffft! Every one knows about that."

"You shut up!"

"Let her vomit it!" the Major said. "No good strapping up a wench's tongue. Here, Anna, here's a cigarette for you. It's my last, so give me your blessing."

"I'll give you more than that," she said. Like one deliberately focussing attention on herself she took a long time to light the cigarette, staring at the flame as if it were an animal whose tricks amused her. "Well, they've got Paul where they wanted now." She hardly moved her lips when she spoke, you had said she was a marionette for which a conjuror used a tiny, harsh falsetto. "Spraacke, it was, he fixed the whole thing. He wanted Paul's job. Paul's first job in ten years, and Spraacke wanted it. Spraacke fixed it with the foreman."

The Major shrugged his shoulders. "That's natural. You don't expect to hold a job if you don't fix the foreman."

"Yes, and the foreman, d'you know how *he* fixed it? Told Paul to oil the worm-gears in the Spann husker. Watched him till he had his hand in. Then he kicked on the power."

Ahlwarth whistled. "My God, what's happened to Paul's hand?"

"Happened?" Anna laughed. "You should know! I expect they've sent it up to your hospital for you to play with, forearm and all. You can do things with a disused forearm, can't you? Use it to teach the young doctors." Her face was whiter than a mushroom, but she still seemed perfectly steady; she smoked fast, gobbling at the cigarette, hunting every cloud of smoke with another jerked from her nostrils. "Or do you think I've cooked it up for the kids? I tell you I would if I could get it. It's not a lot of fresh meat they ever taste, with the men all beating me down to RM 4.50 a night."

The Major eyed her with interest. He always admired Anna, there was so much resilience in her wasted, concave body.

"You can bring an action," he said. "Get damages off the company."

"Damages?" She put an arm round the Major's neck, leant forward and laughed as if a pair of prize cocks were fighting in her chest. "Damages! With Drenker-Schersking on the Bench?" The laughter stopped and she pushed his head away brutally. "D'you remember what happened to the last Marxist that went in front of Drenker-Schersking?"

Sitting all by himself, contented in his own sombre way, Neuling nodded gravely.

"That's right," he said, "the Court's no good. No good for a working person. May be all right if you're in a job. No good for a working person if you've not got a job. They come down on you."

Anna did not hear him. She was clutching the Major's arm, leaning on his shoulder and faintly giggling. "Listen, listen, I haven't told you the funniest part. We went to the police-office, Willi here and I, we went to the police-office, we told the officer about it, I said I'd sue the Company. And what d'you think? He'd had the Company's lawyer in, the

Company's going to act against Paul for inattention to duty."

She was weeping now. The stiffness left her face as when the wire is drawn from a crinoline, it was the face of a child weeping.

"That's right," the one-cheeked man said. "It put the machinery all wrong, Paul's arm being stuck in it like that. They'll claim on him for spoiling the machinery."

The Major had been listening as a lawyer would, nodding and nodding, while his cigarette burnt down to his lips. Suddenly he stiffened.

"Who did you say it was? Who was the bastard who fixed it?"

Neuling answered him:

"Spraacke, she said it was. That would be him, I know that bastard. Always round with the Nationalists."

The Major nodded.

"Spraacke, yes, I know him! Herr Spraacke is in for a surprise . . ."

The voice was as soft as a cat's paw, the claws still retracted. Watching his eyes, Josef knew from Richterhausen days that the man had reached a further stage in intoxication: that point where the brain is quick and sure as a surgeon's hands, only the judgement left in cloud. There was danger here. And he would have stolen away, but the closeness held him. There had come into this tawdry room something more than the warmth of stale bodies drying and breathing together: it was Kameradschaft, it was a religious unity.

Ahlwarth had moved round the table, he caught hold of Anna's wrists.

"Quiet!" he said urgently. "Come, Anna, loosen-up. What's happening to Paul now? Why didn't you bring him to me?"

She said jerkily: "He's in the Lützowstrasse clinic. They said there wasn't a bed in the Moltke."

"Who's the doctor? Who's looking after him?"

"Doctor Grohne."

Ahlwarth spat. "What the devil does Grohne know about a surgical case! Might as well go to a blasted vet." He turned to Josef, letting his voice dive beneath the hubbub. "Look here, Zeppichmann, I'll want you in on this. We've got to get hold of Wildelau and put the fear of God in him. That hospital was built for the poor and the poor have got first claim on it. My God, we'll see him now, we'll rout him out in his blasted mansion and drive some sense at him. Where's your hat, or haven't you got one?"

For Josef it was like being casually asked to take a jump from a church tower.

"But—one can't call on a gentleman at this time! . . . I understand that Doctor Grohne is a very able clinician, he has been in practice many years—"

"You," Ahlwarth said shortly, "would *you* treat a serious case in a poky half-lit shack of a place about eight metres by ten? D'you think it's a doctor's business to hang on to cases just so as to test some crank theory of his own?—that's what Grohne's doing every day!"

Josef put his hands in his coat-pockets. "In any case I was about to tell you," he said resolutely, "I must be getting home now, I have some private work to do. I am most obliged—"

"Private work?" Ahlwarth stared at him, no longer angry, only overcome by curiosity. "But surely—with a doctor—there's no such thing as private work. I mean—we're all in it, aren't we? We're all at the same thing, trying to reduce the world's filthy flood of pain—"

"But we go about it in different ways," Josef said.

They were talking in the special privacy which you can find in noisy, crowded rooms. A wave of quietness disturbed them. Then Neuling spoke:

"At the Bierstube Moritz, that's where you'd find him now. The Moritz, that's where Spracke and his lot go."

The one-cheeked man buttoned his coat.

"The Moritz? Good! We'll start by smashing that."

"Stop!" the Major said. "You listen to me, I understand these things. No good smashing up the Moritz, it's as like as not Spraacke gets away without a dent on him. You never get your man that way."

"I don't mind who I get," Anna said quietly. "I just want to smash up the face of one bloody Nationalist. They've had Paul's arm and that's going to pay for it—I'll get a night's sleep after that. Some one give me a fag!"

"Much better make Spraacke pay the bill himself!" the Major said reasonably. "It's easy enough. There's a back way out of the Moritz—into Verbin's yard. Just chuck in one fuldner bomb and Spraacke'll go out that way as sure as sodomy, having Paul's arm on his mind. The yard's a tidy place to deal with him."

"What's the good?" Ahlwarth said quietly. "If you smash up Spraacke they'll only get their own back."

He was answered by Friede. "Don't interfere, Franz! They've got to learn, those people. If Spraacke gets off without a mark on him they'll think they can do what they like."

The Major had crossed over to Neuling.

"The first thing is to secure a fuldner," he said.

"And where do we get that?"

"Off Simon Gehrman. He's got 'em in a cellar under the shop. Eight Marks, and they're dead reliable. Police stuff."

"Yes, and who's got eight Marks?"

"I've got 1.50," Willi said, and threw the coins on the table.

It had become a business meeting, they were sober and thoughtful. Five more coins landed on the table and Friede counted.

"7.60," she said, and looked all round. "I suppose, Doctor Zeppichmann, you haven't by any chance—?"

Josef hardly hesitated. If a handful of pfennige would

get him out of this he was ready to lose it. He put down a five-Mark note.

"If that will help you—" he said awkwardly.

To his horror, Friede leant over the table, caught him by the shoulders and kissed his lips.

"Franz! Why didn't you tell us? Why didn't you say he was a millionaire?"

They were all staring at the note as if it were ectoplasm, and Neuling was beginning to cry. "Something over," he said hoarsely, "there'll be something over! If I could have something—just fifty pfennige—just to buy a pastry for my babies . . ." Josef felt Ahlwarth's hands pulling him away.

"Here, come with me a moment!" Ahlwarth whispered.

Thankfully, Josef followed him out of the room. They stopped at the top of the stairs.

"Listen!" Ahlwarth said quietly. "It's my fault, I suppose, I shouldn't have had you here, my friends are people you don't understand. But why were you such a fool as to chuck your money about? Don't you see what'll happen? Neuling will get that bomb for them, so as to have the change. Oh yes, they'll make him, nothing'll stop 'em now. If he gets caught with it he'll get twelve months. What happens to his wife then?"

Josef breathed heavily.

"I'm sorry, but it isn't my affair. I don't understand people like that, my parents always kept with respectable people, I don't want to be mixed up with any rowdiness—"

"Yes, but that girl—Anna—don't you want to help her? Don't you see what a state she's in? That husband of hers, the only man on earth who's ever really loved her—"

"Well, I've paid for their bomb, haven't I! I don't see—"

Ahlwarth said with his teeth fastened: "Yes, you've paid for their bomb all right. That was bloody helpful,

wasn't it! You think it'll do them all a world of good, going off and raising hell in the Moritz!"

"Well, that was what they wanted. They wanted excitement, I suppose—"

Ahlwarth no longer troubled to keep his voice down. "Yes, of course they want excitement, it's all they've got to live on! And do you think it's a doctor's business to give sick people what they want?"

"But I'm not their doctor."

"Well, whose doctor are you? Do you mean you'll only use your knowledge of healing for people who pay you? Do you think any one needs a doctor more than people like those?"

The man was surely not quite sane, Josef thought: this talk of doctoring as if it were a kind of evangelism! . . . It was interesting, of course; a German proud of his nation was interested in all such philosophical notions; but to raise them at such a moment as this!

"I think you must leave these things to my own judgement," he said. "My medical course involved great sacrifices, and—and really I am not unsympathetic with poor people, I lived among them for many years . . . I must be getting home now, it was kind of you—"

Ahlwarth was holding his arm.

"I want you," he said steadily, "to go and get back that note. Now, quickly, before they've got a chance to use it."

"I'm sorry, Doctor Ahlwarth, I—I haven't time now. It's up to you, you must persuade them to use it sensibly—get some food or something. I should be glad to think I'd done something to help them."

Ahlwarth let go.

"Very well!" he said, and went down the stairs again. From the bottom he called back, coolly, "I must say, Zep-pichmann, I thank God I'm not a patient of yours."

WHY should he feel faintly guilty? If he had done something wrong it was Ahlwarth's fault. Ahlwarth had asked him to come here, had seemed to welcome him. Ahlwarth should have made it clear to his peculiar friends that he, Josef, was some one of a different kind, a respectable person, a man of education. Really he had been placed in a most difficult position.

As he groped towards the street door he decided it was not a sense of guilt that rubbed him. He was somehow a little envious of Ahlwarth, that was all: envious of the self-assurance which gave him a philosopher's spectacles. Yes, it was simply a question of background. From Ahlwarth's speech, his walk, the way he wore his shabby clothes, one knew he had never had to struggle. Life came to you differently when you started from a backstreet in Richterhausen, you had to fight every inch of it . . . Well, that was over, thank God, and he wouldn't waste an evening on social exercises again.

Reaching the door he breathed the clean air gratefully. The clouds had risen, and a scudding moon broke the wet street into solid shapes. He seemed to have woken from a liverish dream.

He was half-way over the road when he noticed a group of men standing by the wall of a house a little way up the street; a dozen, perhaps—the wall gave them its shadow and he could not see them distinctly. To reach the tram-stop by the way he had come meant passing close to them, and he did not care for that; they stood so very still, so quietly. He turned to go the other way, and instinctively

increased his pace; but he heard swift footsteps following, and some one called,

"One moment, please!"

The voice was cultured, but its tone hard-stopped. Josef turned round.

It was quite a youngster, seventeen or so, who stood there pointing a torch at Josef's face.

"Excuse me," he said, with the quick pleasantness of a hotel receptionist, "I think you came out of that house over there, 24 C?"

"Yes yes."

"You have been to see some one there?"

"Yes, I was visiting my friend Doctor Ahlwarth."

"Doctor Ahlwarth, oh yes! And your name is—?"

With the torch splashing his eyes Josef could see nothing distinctly, but he realised that a second member of the silent group had moved a little towards him. Mentally he was not frightened. But in this situation the shape of a forgotten incident was repeated: a cul-de-sac in Richterhausen, a stifling afternoon in August when one of the schoolboy feuds was on: and he found that his pulse had quickened. Whatever they wanted, these men, one thing was clear enough: they could do what they liked with him. The obvious course was simplicity.

"My name?" he said. "Why, I'm no one of any importance, I'm just a junior house-surgeon from the Moltke Hospital. Doctor Zeppichmann, that's my name . . . Good night!"

"One moment!" the boy said again. He cocked the torch under one arm, pulled out a notebook and wrote the name down. "And your address?"

"I happen to be in rather a hurry—"

"And your address?" the boy repeated.

"Handelstrasse 149."

Recording it, the boy asked, "Number 149, you said? That's where Herr Erich Meisel lives, isn't it?"

"Herr Meisel, yes. Yes, quite a friend of mine."

"Indeed! . . . And who else is with Doctor Ahlwarth this evening?"

That question took Josef by surprise; and because the scientist's mind is quickened by the unexpected it made his thoughts move like the links of a slack chain suddenly brought into tension: Ahlwarth's friends—these men's enemies—Ahlwarth's friends coming out any moment—betrayal—Ahlwarth despising him more than ever.

"I beg your pardon?" he was saying. "I didn't quite hear."

The boy said sharply: "I asked you who else is there this evening!"

Who else? In his mind's camera he saw them all together—Anna's racked form and bloodless face, the naïve, hurt face attached to Neuling's froglike body, Friede with her fat legs waving in the air . . . They were friends, those people sharing out their last few cigarettes in Ahlwarth's dingy basement; they were nearer to himself than this presumptuous jackanapes. With sudden resolution, he said:

"If you really want to know, there wasn't anybody—no one but myself. And now if you don't mind I'll be getting on."

That unexpected firmness had its effect. The boy, aiming his torch, held Josef's face for a moment in a clawing scrutiny. "Oh!" he said, with a trace of confusion. "Well then, that's all right, you can go now." He turned and walked back towards his friends.

Josef went on at a stroll, even pausing to light a cigarette. That was the way, he thought—ignore these swash-bucklers, show them he wasn't scared. He would keep on like this till he reached the first corner, then turn and put on pace. But he had not got so far when he heard a noise

behind him: the Major's whistling laugh, and then, quite clearly through the night's silence, the hysterical voice of Anna: ". . . care who it is as long as I smash up some one."

The sensible course was to run—he knew that. Instead of running he turned round, shouted with all the wind in his lungs:

"Look out! Go back!"

If Ahlwarth's friends had been clearheaded enough to take that warning they might have got back in time. But they had reached the middle of the road, chattering like school-boys, before they seemed to hear anything. They stopped then, and their halt served as signal to the men who were waiting.

Josef was standing still. Out of an instant's silence the first sounds that reached him were a thud and a scream together. Then the rush of feet over the gritty surface of the road, a cry cut off as if a switch were turned, the hiss of clothes tearing. The moon was behind a cloud and he saw the scuffle only as in early cinematograph, a clot of wriggling shapes that bunched and spread. But when the shifting clouds spilt a moment's light he had a glimpse of a circle neatly formed, the men on its circumference stooping and rising with the regularity of labourers beating a carpet. The screaming had all stopped by then; nothing was going on except this methodical swing of shoulders, and beyond the thumping noise there was no sound but a chain of throaty cries, as if a stammerer were trying to shout a message to the whole of Hartzinnfeld.

Some one got loose from the shambles and came towards him at the loping hobble of a hen with a weight on its legs: it was Neuling, whimpering like a child; his face, as Josef saw it, a wet dish-cloth squeezed into a ball. He was ten yards off when another man broke from the skirmish and came in pursuit.

As if he were a child watching his first circus Josef

stayed where he was and let Neuling stumble blindly past him; his eyes were on the man who followed. He would have stayed like that, a bemused spectator, if Neuling hadn't fallen. The shaking thump of that fall, the pitiful cry, made him turn his head; in one moment he saw Neuling's body like a black pillow pitched in the roadway, heard the pursuer's excited shout and the speeded clatter of his feet; then a spurt of reckless anger tightened all his limbs and he jumped across to intercept.

The man was coming too fast to dodge, his weight poured over Josef's body like a landslide. Sight and hearing went out together. Josef only knew that his shoulder was in biting pain, that his right hand clutched at something soft, his left struck flesh and struck it again as the roadway and the patchy sky swept up together round his head. Then he was lying on his stomach with his mouth full of blood and grit, and the man who had charged him lay a yard away, as quietly as a shepherd boy on a summer hillside. Afterwards he remembered that Neuling had disappeared, the moon had shown only the two of them on that expanse of road; but at the time it made no difference. His body took complete control, got itself upright, and then against the tether of pain he was running as he'd never run since boyhood.

HE FOUND himself back in the main road, and there the brighter lamps pushed open a little way the sliding shutters of consciousness. One of his trouser-legs was ripped from thigh to ankle. There was some one who mended a tear like that, a little Jew in Karlsruherstrasse. What was his name? —Kurt Wolfe. Wolfe might do it—not an easy job—cost six or seven Marks. But the suit had cost sixty-five—worth it . . . He wondered why he felt so faint, and then as he moved his arm he knew: fracture of the left clavicle. The lamp he watched was bouncing, bouncing, like a harbour-light seen through a port-hole. He sat down on the foot-path.

A cab drew up and the driver helped him in. "Take you to a doctor?" Yes, he must see a doctor. "Doctor Frerk, he's the nearest." No, Frerk belonged to the hospital, he didn't want any one who knew him to see him in this state. Who was it that Ahlwarth had talked about? Grohne! Yes, he would do.

"Doctor Grohne in Lützowstrasse, if you please."

He must have slept in the cab. When he came to himself he was sitting on a leather sofa in a narrow, distempered room, he remembered as from a dream that the cabman had helped him up some steps and that he had paid him, bringing his right hand to his left pocket. Now a door opened and some one said, "Come in here, will you!" He obeyed, walking quite steadily. His brain seemed to be clear now.

"Well, you've been scrapping in the streets, I suppose?"

It was a small, untidy surgery: Josef noticed that a pot of ferns stood in the wash-basin. The man who addressed

him—Grohne, he supposed—smelt faintly of brandy; he was an elderly Prussian with pigeon's-egg eyes whose hair and skin looked to have been bleached by equatorial sun. He said:

"I don't know how many more times my evening's work is going to be cut up by rowdies coming in here for treatment. I don't know why you always pick on me."

"I happen to have been attacked," Josef said.

"Indeed, yes, how surprising! Well, you'd better get your coat and shirt off, then we'll see what wants cleaning up."

Josef tried, and the pain nearly tumbled him over.

"If you will help me, please!" he said.

Grohne eyed him more attentively.

"Collar-bone?"

"Yes."

"Wait a bit, then, we'd better cut the sleeve. I've got some scissors somewhere."

"No no, it's a fairly new suit, I—I can manage, I think."

Somehow he managed, with Grohne giving a push or a tug where it seemed to be wanted, rather as a foreman takes a hand in dismantling an old toolshed. Stripped, he stood and waited for Grohne to do something. So long as he kept his arm quite still and his eyes fixed on one object he seemed to be all right. He stared at the table, which was loaded with books and crumpled journals, jars full of mossy growths, a bicycle tyre and an ancient sporting-gun.

Grohne walked all round him, surveying his body with an archaeologist's suspicious eyes.

"You want me to set it, I suppose?"

"If you would be so kind!"

"Right! Well, come over here! You know, I suppose, that this little job hurts like hell?"